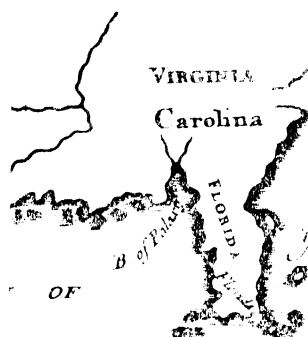


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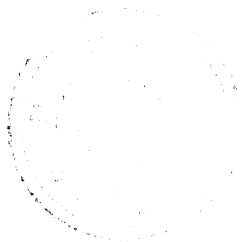
The Great Days of Piracy

Books by George Woodbury

John Goffe's Mill
The Story of a Stanley Steamer

The
Great Days
of Piracy

George Woodbury



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The Great Days of Piracy



CHAPTER ONE

Frontier of Europe

MUCH OF our national history is written in terms of our westward-expanding frontier—that momentous century of migration from the eastern seaboard sweeping over prairie, plains, desert, and mountains toward the west. But this frontier and its development were preceded by an earlier and quite as significant human migration. For the West Indies were the frontier of Europe for three hundred years. It was a maritime frontier, unique in history. Its pioneers were the same adventurous, often outlaw, breed that gravitates toward all frontiers, but with this distinction: they were seafaring men. The buccaneers and pirates of the Caribbean were the counterparts of the “mountain men” and desperados of the American West. The great national tree so portentously inclined in the winning of the West had its first twig bent in the expansion of Europe into the West Indies. One of the conspicuous features of that expansion was the rise and development of piracy.

Piracy, while not the original form of sin, is one of great antiquity, long antedating the discovery of the New World or, in fact, any period of recorded history. It was already

long established and well recognized centuries before Europeans brought the idea across the sea and inoculated the Western Hemisphere.

One authority ranks piracy as the third oldest profession and furthermore presumes that "piracy must have begun in the far, dim ages and perhaps when some naked savage, paddling himself across a tropical river, met with another adventurer on a better tree trunk carrying a bigger bunch of bananas."

The Aegean Sea of the classical world swarmed with pirates, already well organized long before the Christian Era. A few years ago excavations for a new dockyard at Piraeus, port of Athens, disclosed mute testimony of pirates and official retribution. Huge crosses, preserved by long burial in the sand, had fixed to their extended arms the skeletons of pirates exposed centuries ago as warning to all nautical ill-doers. They had not been nailed in crucifixion but secured by bronze staples at neck, wrist and ankles.

Julius Caesar was captured by Aegean pirates and, being a young man of substantial fortune, was able to ransom his freedom. He was also a young man of greater spirit than his captors had suspected, for he fitted out a fleet against these same pirates and took them in turn. With less business acumen than they had shown, Caesar promptly crucified the whole crew of pirates—and at his own expense.

Pompey, Caesar's great contemporary, made his well-deserved reputation in the suppression of all the Aegean pirates, clearing the ship lanes from Rome to the Levant of all such troublesome interlopers.

Piracy as practiced in the classical period was principally a matter of ransom, maritime kidnaping. When a ship was taken, the passengers and crew were the prize. The potentially ransomable were retained and next of kin notified, stipulating time, place, and price. Those of poorer estate were usually invited to jump overboard and walk home, encouraged and finally coerced, to do so. Possibly this form of the hoariest of nautical jokes is also the origin of the most widely known and least substantiated of all later pirate lore—"walking the plank."

During the Middle Ages, Scandinavian seafaring folk indulged in a form of piracy not so well organized, but piracy just the same. These magnificent sailors, berserkers, and unrivaled naval architects, whenever they became tired of fishing, set out on plundering expeditions that carried them far afield. In fact, some of them got as far away from home as Egypt in one direction and to what is now Minnesota in the other. The society on which they lived could not support as sophisticated a refinement as ransom, so these Norse pirates specialized more in amphibious operations directed principally against both sides of the Channel, especially monasteries.

Saxo Grammaticus, medieval historian of Denmark, has handed down a story of pirates unrivaled in its eerie plot by anything this side of Italian opera. There was once in the Middle Ages a king of the Goths called Sygardus, who had a daughter, Alvilda, who was, of course, very beautiful. Princess Alvilda, after reaching marriageable age, was promised to a neighboring prince, Alf, son of Sigarus, King of

Denmark. But she did not like the idea. She wanted a career, self-expression, more than orange blossoms. With a resolution that did her credit, "she dress'd in male attire," persuaded a number of her girl-friends to do likewise, stole a boat, and rowed out to sea. This disguised Amazon crew fell in with a crew of professional—and male—pirates who had recently suffered the loss of their captain. Such was the charm and agreeable manner of Alvilda that the pirates, ignorant of her sex, asked her to be their captain, and join their forces. The now co-ed pirate crew plundered up and down the Danish coast with such uniform success that their depredations reached the ear of Alf, prince of that country—and Alvilda's jettisoned bridegroom. Subduing pirates was an important phase of regal business, as it was then and there understood, so the young crown prince sailed in pursuit of the raiders. Prince met pirate on the high seas in an encounter of stubborn and spectacular proportions. But before the day was out the pirates were defeated and all taken prisoner. Alf, having spent so much time and effort battling with the leader of the piratical opposition, was naturally curious to find out what he had captured. He pried the helmet off his antagonist to see.

"Alvilda!"

"Alf!" (*Climax*)

Wedding bells rang out in the Royal Palace of Denmark. Alf and his Alvilda became one; his crew and her crew became another. Helmets were beaten into diaper pails; Mars gave way to Venus. Whatever happened to the balance of

the pirates, the affiliated males of the co-ed corsair crew, is not recorded in the chronicle. But if they were not all killed in action they must have been hanged immediately afterward, for there was nothing else for them to do except confuse the plot.

Other exploits of these northern pirates are less romantic, biologically speaking, but much more wild and adventurous. Northern pirates wandering into what is now Russia sailed down the river systems to the Black Sea during the ninth century A.D. They left a trail of plundered towns and blond babies behind them. Eventually they arrived at Constantinople, where their size, fair complexion, and insatiable addiction to drunkenness, gluttony and continuous brawls became the admiration of the sophisticated city. Unable to get rid of them without a major war the Byzantine emperor found the easier way out. He enrolled them all in his body-guard where as the Varangers they became a celebrated corps of regal gorillas, who, under pretext of police duty, terrified the Empire, even as far afield as Alexandria and Upper Egypt.

Scandinavian pirates were not the only variety of sea rover which affected the destinies of Europe. Moslem pirates in the Mediterranean so stimulated European thinking toward another route to the treasures of the East that Columbus' voyage to the Western world was a logical consequence. Equally logical, the first result of his discovery was the spread and expansion of piracy into the Caribbean, where piracy was destined to flourish as never before. In fact, it can be

said that the discovery of the Western Hemisphere was caused by one kind of pirate and resulted in another and perhaps worse variety.

The date 1453 should be as well known as 1492, for in that year one of the truly momentous events of history took place. Constantinople, for centuries the bulwark of Europe against the expanding force of Islam, finally fell to the conquering Turks—an event which turned the attention of western Europe away from the East toward the West and, at the same time, gave rise to the cultural upswing misknown as the Renaissance. The ancient city, so often besieged by so many assorted paladins, had long kept alive the learning of Greece and Rome. The culture of the ancient world had not died out with the decline of Rome, but had been transferred to the Eastern capital, Byzantium, and had there been fostered. Constantine Palacologus, last of the Caesars, lay dead in the gutter of his looted capital; true to tradition, he died fighting. The victorious Turks found his mangled body under a heap of dead, close to the gate of St. Romanus. They could identify him by his purple boots, the insignia of Roman emperors since the beginning.

Embers from the great disaster were scattered wide over Europe, then in the torpor of the Middle Ages. Refugee scholars, artists, engineers, and lawyers found sanctuary with fellow Christians in the West and carried to them from Constantinople the heritage of Greece and Rome. These embers rekindled in the blaze of the Renaissance, which was no spontaneous combustion but simply another step in the transference of the organizing and engineering skill of

Rome, coupled with the liberal arts inherited from Greece.

The reason why historians have slighted the vast importance of Constantinople and its fall is not hard to find. The Christian Church had been split for centuries into two rival factions—the Western Church, with Rome as its capital, and the Eastern Church, centered at Constantinople. They hated each other with all the enthusiasm and sincerity which seem to distinguish Christian sects. For centuries, ever since the Gothic invasions, Rome was the poor relation and Constantinople the rich and powerful. Unfortunately for historical accuracy, the histories of western Europe were written by Roman Churchmen with an ecclesiastical axe to grind. What they were unable to discount regarding the contributions of their eastern rival they ignored. History, in order to be at all scientifically objective and accurate, should be written by neutral nationals.

The Roman Christians of western Europe had only a brief period of rejoicing at the fall of their ancient rival. All too soon it became evident that Islam, now surrounding most of the Mediterranean littoral, was going to be a menace and a nuisance combined. Venice, Genoa, and the Italian city-states had long traded with Constantinople for the treasures brought by overland caravan from the Far East. It was a prosperous business. Now they discovered that the Turks drove far sharper bargains, when they could be dealt with at all. Furthermore the Turks, now masters of the Golden Horn, the finest harbor of the Levant, created a fleet of corsairs which preyed with gusto and success on all Christian shipping wherever found. Islam, so successful on

land, now took to the sea, both from Aegean bases and from their affiliated Moslem strongholds on the North African coast. Piracy, in terms of maritime plunder, amphibious operations against unprotected seaports, and the systematic ransom of all captured Christians, became a kind of national policy—and a most vexatious one. Until the battle of Lepanto in 1571, Islam held the naval supremacy of the Mediterranean. This major naval engagement weakened Moslem strength but did not break it.

Moslem pirates were so formidable for so long that their very name still remains as a byword today. Barbary pirates, Algerine Corsairs, or Salee Rovers, as they were variously called, were pirates clearly enough, and yet had the distinction of being also well organized and established governments. But they supported themselves by quite frankly plundering all passing shipping of the Christian persuasion and holding influential captives for ransom. It was a prosperous business and redounded to the glory of Allah. Their activities greatly curtailed all Christian shipping in the western Mediterranean. Also they were much too formidable a fighting force for any European nation to subdue. The corsairs preyed impartially upon English, French, Portuguese, or Spanish shipping—all Christians were alike to them—but this fact did not encourage co-operative, joint European action against them. Finally the Christian states of Europe discovered that these pirates would accept an annual tribute for national immunity. Even pirates do not like to work any harder than necessary for their living. From this time on, the Barbary pirates declined as a fighting force.



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Anne Bonney



Amsterdam by JAN ten HOORN. Boeckverkoper
Over het Oude Heerclogement ~1678

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Title page of a book about Buccaneers

They were a shell of their former strength when the U.S. Navy dealt them a crippling blow early in the nineteenth century.

The confusion characteristic of Renaissance politics is well exemplified in the fact that many of the most prominent and successful Moslem pirates were renegade Christians, not Moslem to the manner born at all. The renegades were greatly encouraged by the fact that in these pirate fleets advancement was based on merit alone, which was something unheard of in European navies for centuries. Their behavior was no worse than that of Christian mariners, which was not saying very much; if anything, they were perhaps less bigoted. No seafaring man from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century was considered experienced until he had been taken by these rovers at least once. Protestant sailors who had survived both Moslem and Christian capture claimed they suffered less under the green banner of the Prophet than they had under the cross of the Inquisition.

Seafaring Moslems were pirates and yet, in a manner of speaking, occupied an anomalous position in that fraternity. "A pyrate is *Hostis humanis generis*, a common enemy," runs the ancient statute, "with whom neither Faith or Oath is to be kept. And by the Laws of Nature, Princes and States are responsible for their Neglect if they do not provide Remedies for restraining these sorts of Robberies. Though Pyrates are called common Enemies yet they are not properly to be termed so. He is only to be honored with that Name who hath a Commonwealth, a Court, a Treasury, Consent

and Concord of Citizens and some Way, if Occasion be, of Peace and League. But when they have reduced themselves into a Government or State they then are allowed the Solemnities of War, and the Rights of Legation."

Thus although the Moslem pirates, especially those on the northern coast of Africa, were from one point of view (their own) "Governments or States," from another point of view (the Europeans') they were "Pyrates."

The immediate and crucial effect of 1453 was that Europe could no longer use the usual trade routes to the East with the old freedom. Another route must be found to that fabulous treasure, and a way not menaced by active, well-organized and aggressive infidels. Diaz found the long route around the Cape of Good Hope to India, but it was a long voyage and the essential secrets of the way jealously held. Ocean travel was still in its immemorably old coast-hugging stage of development. Sailors kept the shore in sight all the time; at night they either hove to and anchored or went ashore.

Columbus' really revolutionary departure from tradition was deep-sea navigation. He was hunting for the eastern route, too, and never lived to find out that he had really discovered something else that would prove far wealthier than the Grand Cham of Tartary or fabled Prester John. He set off the greatest period of imperial expansion ever known, ushered in a literally golden era in which bigotry, incredible wealth, short-sighted political ideologies, and unequal laws all played a vital part.

When Columbus was called upon for a description of the island of Haiti he crumpled a sheet of paper in his hand and dropped the angular mass upon the table. "Thus," said he, laconically. Perhaps the legend is true; anyway it serves to depict the geography of those West Indian islands, which are not flat, low-lying sandspits. Most of the islands, especially the larger ones, rise steeply from the level of the Caribbean into ragged masses of mountains, seamed with ravines and crowded with dense semi-tropical foliage to their very summits. From a distance they are beautiful in vivid primary colors of startling intensity. The sea is incredibly blue, shading to jade in shoaler waters. The sky is the hard brightness of a paler blue. The coral sands that skirt the shore are blazing white, while the mountains behind and above them are a rich jungly green interspersed with brilliantly colored flowers and blossoms. And all this is accentuated by a quality of sunlight as glaring and pitiless as a magnesium flare.

There is extremity of exotic beauty, but always with an undertone of sinister violence. There is the silent threat of the shark's thornlike fins cleaving those gorgeous waters. Buzzards circle endlessly in that ethereal heaven, waiting. The fer-de-lance, deadliest of vipers, lurks in the exuberant vegetation. They are the maritime Gardens of Eden, and yet always with the primal eldest curse of mankind brooding silently over them.

When the Spaniards first settled in the West Indies, they found the Indians amenable enough, at first. All Indians looked alike to those who had no more scientific interest in the natives than as souls to be salvaged for the Church or

gold to be acquired for their pockets. Later the Spaniards were able to differentiate two kinds of Indians, and learned what had been happening before their arrival.

The Arawak Indians had inhabited the islands first of all and were a gentle unaggressive breed, firmly dedicated to the philosophy of the Minimum of Labor, which was well suited to the conditions. The climate is pleasantly mild; nature provides bountifully with very little encouragement; and neither clothes nor permanent dwellings are essential. They had relaxed and enjoyed themselves in undisturbed possession until another variety of Indian, the Caribs, moved in on them from the south. These strangers were darker in color, warlike, and aggressive. Paddling in canoes, these interlopers appeared from adjoining islands and soon made themselves thoroughly disagreeable.

Among a number of other nasty habits the Caribs were cannibals and began eating the Arawakan first settlers. Why the Caribs indulged in humans as an article of diet, especially when surrounded with so much more palatable fare, will always remain a mystery. Those who have discussed the matter with Papuans and other cannibals of the old school are convinced that Homo is almost inedible, and not wholly for sentimental reasons either. Humans apparently have a disagreeable brackish taste and are uncommonly tough even when boiled for a considerable length of time. Very probably the Caribs were ceremonial cannibals, eating their enemies as a matter of ritual, rather than the "strictly from hunger" kind. The Arawaks, naturally protesting at such treatment, fought with and were promptly defeated

by the Caribs. Columbus and his Spaniards arrived at a time when the Caribs held most of the seacoast and the Arawaks were driven into the mountaintops.

The Spaniards discovered another quaint Carib custom that confused them quite a little at first. They found along the coast whole villages of Arawak women and children, but no men. "Amazons," concluded the learned among the discoverers, bolstering the theory by a thorough knowledge of the classics. In a way they were right, only these were involuntary and non-Women's-Rights Amazons. When the Caribs who cruised among the islands raided an Arawak village, they killed and ate the menfolk but preserved the women. The Caribs themselves did not take their own women cruising and, as they were wanderers by nature, left these all-female colonies behind them for their convenience whenever they should put in there again.

The Spaniards, of course, put an abrupt stop to this kind of heathen nonsense. Carib or Arawak made no difference to Spain. They appropriated their souls for the Church and hauled off their bodies to work the mines. Such was the promptness of the program and the condition of the mines that in a very few years there were no Indians of any kind left in the West Indies. There was a clear field for Europeans with no natives in competition.

The hitherto financially arthritic Kingdom of Spain found itself suddenly rich—richer than anyone had ever dreamed possible before. More by good luck than good judgment the Spanish Crown had laid claim to and filed with the Pope clear title to the whole thing. But the Portuguese had a

claim in too, and the Portuguese were also good Catholics. The Papal Line of Demarcation decided the matter. The Spanish Crown owned everything west of a certain line, the Portuguese everything to the east in the vague and far-away territory. No one was fully aware of the extent of the bargain at the time, but Spain had possession of all of the Western Hemisphere, except the easternmost tip of Brazil.

Spanish Church and State, which were at this time fused into a social entity, entered into this newly opened field of exploitation with gusto. There were a lot of heathen souls to be saved; this was the business of the Church, and the churchmen went to work. There was a lot of gold to be picked up for the picking; the Crown responded to the material attraction with equal enthusiasm.

Tinctured by the somewhat bilious outlook of the English and other historians who were not in on the development, it has become customary to regard this burgeoning of Spain into the New World as a kind of large-scale atrocity story. Those of the Protestant persuasion were especially sour at the way the conquest proceeded. The more profitable the venture became, the sourer became the outlook of those on the outside.

And even without hostile commentary, Hernando Cortez' own letters to his king, reporting his progress in importing Christianity and exporting gold from Mexico, and his method of accomplishing the double aim, are bloody, brutal reading. Just the same, there is no more pathetic document in history than his final letter written to his king, long after

the Conquest, when Spain was rolling in the wealth Cortez had won.

"I am old, poor and in debt—again and again I have begged your Majesty to be pleased to grant to his vassal a small part of that he had won. I am no longer of an age to spend my time travelling, but must rather settle down and make up my account with God. It is a long one and I have but a short time to balance it."

Scribbled on the back of this letter in an unknown clerkish hand: "*Nay que responder*" (There is no need for reply).

It is to be hoped that the aging sinner made up his account with God; it is certain his Royal Master never did.

Like all eras of intense wholesale selfishness and callousness to suffering, there were exceptions. Bartolomé de Las Casas is little known except to scholars, although a greater, braver, and more dedicated man never trod on leather. This nobleman, high official in the Church, alone stood out against his king and Rome in support of the maltreated Indians. He failed in his immediate objective, but in the larger sense achieved a mighty work whose consequences have been shared by all humanity alike. It was he who established the pattern for the Jesuits in their treatment of the Indian, he who established the principle of segregating the natives as much as possible from the corrupting influence of their conquerors, and he who taught them the European arts of peace in exchange for their knowledge of pharmacy, botany and agriculture. It is still not generally recognized that we owe most of our drugs and, with the exception of turnips, cabbages and few others, all our vegetables to the

American Indian—and to Bartolomé de Las Casas, the forgotten Saint who saw to it that the knowledge was transmitted.

Whether as a result of good judgment or just good luck, Columbus found the only practicable sailing routes to and from the New World. Prevailing easterly winds carried across to the West Indies from the Canary or Cape Verde islands in almost a straight line. The return voyage was less direct, following the Gulf Stream as far east as possible and then curving down on reasonably dependable winds toward Spain. For as long as men used sail this same route was followed between the Old World and the New. But for a long time it was held as an exclusive Spanish state secret. Navigators had few, wholly undependable, instruments and almost no charts. Professional seamen held these devices in abhorrence for centuries, for they tended to reduce the importance of individual pilots. The pilot, the man who had been there before, knew the way and was a great and important nautical figure, but pilots of this time held to their exclusive knowledge with all the clannishness of the medieval guilds.

Spain, both Church and State, from being a weakling in the European scheme of power politics, now felt her newly acquired and golden oats. Wars were the standard regal diversion of the day, and now Spain could afford first-class wars. Soon she had the largest and best-equipped army in Europe. The Spanish infantry had a brilliant reputation for courage and dash. At sea, Spanish ships and sailors were regarded the best.

The Spanish Church had always taken profound exception to heretic England on professional grounds. As soon as English adventurers followed Spain into the New World, learned the routes, and began to affect Spanish mercantile interests, the State had its own reasons for disliking England too.

Elizabethan England was poor and not anxious to stay that way. England was the island headquarters of the anti-Roman Church. There was much too much of the old Scandinavian pirate blood in south and west English sailormen to see the new riches of Spain come over the seas unmolested. There soon sprang up the Elizabethan gentleman-adventurer, well-exemplified by Drake, Cavendish and the Hawkinses, father and son. These picturesque characters, who took equal pride in turning a sonnet or sacking a city, worked on a principle of individual initiative and private enterprise incredible today. Communications were slow and wholly unreliable. Whoever would go adventuring did so at his own risk. When the adventure came off well, the adventurer became a national hero—adopted *ex post facto* as a royal servant. If he failed and in doing so created an international incident, the Crown disowned him.

Spain tried and tried hard to keep the New World her exclusive property, but it was just too big and there were not enough Spaniards. On the whole they did pretty well in maintaining “no trespassing” on half a world. They did less well in the face of increasing competition from Elizabethan adventurers.

With this in mind, it is not surprising that Spain con-

sidered England as a nest of pirates, heretic pirates at that, and well worth extermination. The skill of these same pirates, plus an unexpected and violent storm, wrecked the Great Armada, severely crippling all important Spanish sea power and at the same time hugely encouraging the pirates they intended to suppress.

From then on what had been the private property of Spain, the New World, became the open frontier of all Europe too. The great defeat of Spain in the destruction of the Armada acted as a signal for more English adventurers to swarm toward the west, and with them Danish, Dutch, and French adventurers as well. The gentleman-adventurer was superseded by adventurers much less gentlemanly.

Ruined courtiers, flyblown nobility, broken soldiers, desperados, bandits, and felons flocked from western Europe to the riches now feebly protected in the Caribbean. The cry was "Westward Ho!" The frontier of Europe, filled with treasure, and at the same time a vent for the socially, politically and economically miscast at home, was open.



CHAPTER TWO

Nursery of Pirates

ALL THROUGH the Middle Ages, Europe had looked toward the East for the pot of gold at the rainbow's end. Wealth, which everyone coveted, lay in commerce with the Levant, and naturally those European countries most closely situated on the Mediterranean had the advantage. Venice, Genoa, and the Italian city-states were rich in their eastern trade, while western Europe farther away, or not on direct water routes, was poor.

The discovery of the New World changed all this. At the same time that the old eastern routes were rendered more difficult by the presence of victorious Turks, and other assorted infidels, the new and greater riches of the West were discovered. Now western European kingdoms, especially those bordering on the Atlantic, found themselves nearer to the greater pot of gold on the newly found western end of the rainbow. Spain found the treasure first, but France, England and, to a lesser extent, Holland and Denmark were in this new gold rush westward. All Europe faced the other way for wealth and this time the Italian city-states were in

the least-favored position. As Venice and Genoa declined, Spain first, then France, and finally England rose to greater and greater wealth and power.

Almost from the beginning it was a three-cornered race, with Spain, France, and England jockeying for position through two centuries of warfare for the prize. Spain had the advantage of the headstart but soon dropped back, leaving France and England battling for the lead, with England the final winner. Essentially the competition was European supremacy in a world of power politics (which of the three powers was going to be master of Europe) but the sinews of war for the long struggle came from the New World. The actual fighting might be in the Low Countries, but the money to pay for it came from the Americas. The one who cornered the American riches was going to win.

Men who would gain and hold the New-World treasure for their Old-World King were the essential ingredient in this race for wealth and power. In this respect, man power, the three nations differed greatly, the difference directly traceable to conditions in their respective homelands. And this difference in personal character, as much as any one factor, decided the great issue.

Spain, since the expulsion of the Moors, had become the best unified kingdom of Europe. There was little internal strife, the King sat secure upon his throne, the nobility were relatively harmonious, the lower classes of society, docile. The Roman Church had full and absolute sway throughout the land without spiritual competition. Church and State had common cause and co-operated fully. Spain, as has

been said, spent the first of its New-World gold in building up the best and most powerful army and navy in Europe. But King and Church were so absolute in their control and insisted on complete minute supervision of all activities that only those men pleasing to both could obtain positions of responsibility in the New-World administration. These men were not always the best for the work. The first Spaniards in the New World, the Conquistadores, ruthless and unprincipled as they were, men of iron courage, rubber morals, as indestructible as porcelain, proved themselves first-class fighting men. Pizarro, Cortez, and Coronado performed miracles for their King, but almost invariably ran afoul of the bureaucratic machine back home and ended their brilliant careers in disgrace, or poverty, or both. Those who followed, warned by this, took pains to care for their own interests first. The result was inevitable, the decline of Spanish power by the middle of the seventeenth century.

The internal condition of France ever since the Reformation had been uneasy and disturbed. While the King and kingdom were nominally Roman Church, many of the most important nobles and virtually all of the mercantile and tradesmen of the upper brackets were Protestant. This division weakened the power of the King, in that it damaged the unity of the nation. For some strange reason, most of France's best sailors were Protestants. Under the Edict of Nantes, Protestants enjoyed nominal equality. Richelieu in forging France into a powerful, united nation, and incidentally setting the pattern for nationalism that would be the bane of Europe for centuries, accomplished his purpose

by making the Protestant faction subservient through the Capitulation of La Rochelle, their maritime stronghold. Louis XIV finished the work by the famous Revocation of the Edict, a generation later.

Fugitive sailors from the wreck of La Rochelle gravitated to the West Indies, as stragglers with no particular plan or policy in mind beyond the preservation of their own lives. With them they brought all the fervent hatred that Calvinists who had suffered persecution felt for Catholicism. Great numbers of these embittered French sailors drifted to the island of Tortuga off the coast of Haiti. But France, united now under Richelieu, had too much going on in Europe to take an abiding interest in the New World. Except for the Calvinist sailors of La Rochelle and a small percentage of adventurous misfits who had made France too hot to hold them, few Frenchmen went overseas. The motive behind the first French immigration to the West Indies was not so much attraction toward the islands as repulsion from their homeland.

England at the start of the seventeenth century and all through the following hundred years was in a very different status from either of its two great competitors—an apparent disadvantage that eventually gave England by far the greater final advantage in the matter of colonizing. England had emerged from the feudal condition before the other countries of Europe, through no special inspiration, but on strictly economic grounds. The Reformation hit England with shattering impact. When Henry VIII, for reasons of his own, broke with the Roman Church and confiscated its

great landed properties, he did much more than alter the spiritual complexion of his country. Land was the source of wealth and therefore the property of the nobility. Serfs were essential in the feudal estate for man power to till the land and follow their lords in time of war. Warfare of the feudal kind disappeared early in England, releasing the serfs from one of their duties; the wool business became more and more important than the tilling of land. Sheep require huge pasturage and relatively few shepherds, so that before long land unencumbered by serfs was desirable. A serf while bound to his bit of land has also the land bound to him. Soon the English peasant whose military service was no longer needed came to pay rent for the use of his lord's land. The "renter," tenant-at-will upon the soil, has no firmer claim upon it than his lease. As more and more land was needed for sheep, more and more peasant tenants were evicted and their tillage land turned to pasturage. England swarmed with serfs thus dispossessed and vagrant, wandering about the country. Under Elizabeth, "sturdy rogues and vagabonds" became a class of felons, liable to arrest on sight, and a great nuisance to society. England wanted some place to dispose of all these undesirables and unemployed.

The West Indies or colonial America would be an excellent repository for such folk, especially the West Indies where could be found the dyestuffs so essential in the wool business—indigo, cochineal, logwood. The merchant class was in a powerful position in England, the King was limited in his power, the nobility more a matter of wealth than

biology. Catholic and Protestant divided the kingdom spiritually, with little love lost on either side. There were dozens of minor Protestant sects constantly springing up which made the discord worse. In fact, from the time of Elizabeth through to the time of the first Hanoverian George, England was in a constant internal turmoil, socially, politically, economically and spiritually.

The colonies on the North American mainland were already established and well stocked with English, displaced by the upheavals at home, and transported convicts, when Cromwell's "Western Design" took tangible form in the English seizure of Jamaica from Spain under the Protector's Admirals, Penn and Venable. The island was weakly held by Spain, considered rather unimportant, since it had no mines of value, but the incident touched off a war with Spain. This was the first non-Spanish and permanent incursion into the Caribbean, and Jamaica became a sort of dump for all undesirables from England. At every turn of the political wheel, and it spun like a top, the losers were whirled out of England, many of them ending up in Jamaica. The Civil War threw out the Royalists, the Restoration threw out the Puritans, Scottish Covenanters were quelled and the balance shipped overseas, Monmouth's supporters, victims of Sedgemoor and the Bloody Assize sent thousands to Jamaica in servitude. The lost cause of Bonny Dundee added more to the export, the Irish "troubles" shipped out their tally, culminating in the aftermath of the disaster at the Boyne. And all the time "the sturdy rogues and vagrants" were being transported, along with felons of all kinds, and



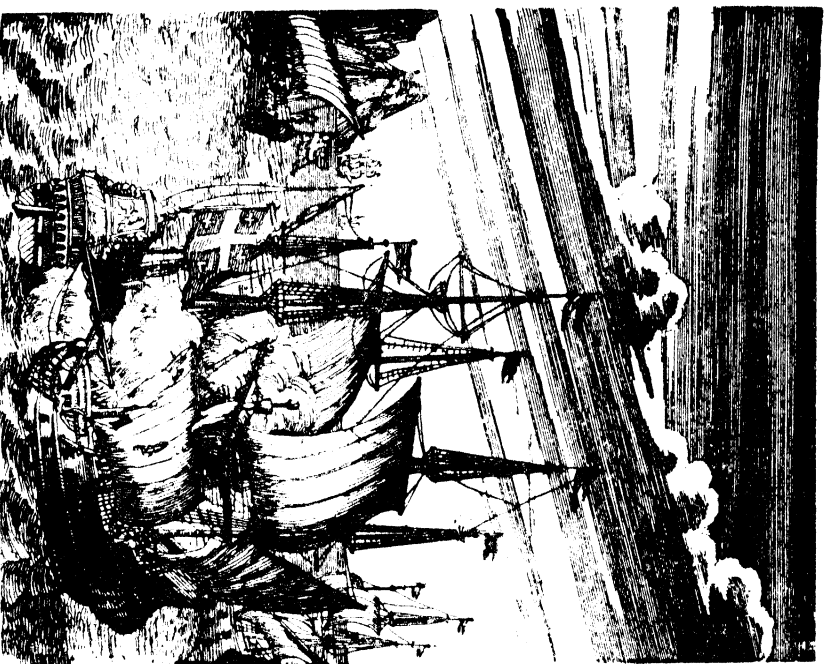
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Sir Henry Morgan



By permission of the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum

Mary Read



By permission of the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum

Seafight of Buccaneers with Spanish ships



By permission of the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum

Blackbeard alias Edward Teach

the whole gamut of "indentured" bondsmen who might or might not be criminal.

Such were the human ingredients, as much thrown out of Europe as attracted to the New World, from Spain, France, and England which met in the West Indies with such volcanic results. They were variable in quality, and quantity depending on conditions in Europe.

Through them all ran the sinister thread of that most curious institutional mainspring of so much mischief, the indenture system. At the beginning of the seventeenth century indenture meant the legal contract binding an apprentice and his master. The document which set forth the duties of the master and the duties of the apprentice was inscribed in duplicate on both ends of a paper. This paper was torn or cut in two along a ragged line, so that each of the contracting parties could have his copy. This indented, or serrated, edge between the two copies gave it the name of "indenture." In an age when reading was not a common accomplishment, the fit of the ragged edges of two contracts made it clear even to the illiterate that they were duplicates.

The age-old indenture system which had in former times been merely master and apprentice at a craft, or really teacher and student relationship as applied to a trade, became expanded to meet the labor needs of the colonial plantations and at the same time relieve the labor surplus at home. For a matter of fifty years or more, until black permanent slaves kidnaped from Africa replaced them, indentured servants, as they were called, supplied the labor of the colonies. Tens of thousands of white men and women

and children were ferried across the seas and sold into a curious kind of temporary bondage on the plantations. For a long time and until Negro slavery became well established there was a great deal of confusion in the colonies regarding the exact legal status of these indentured servants, but "servants" or "bondsmen" they were called and were never referred to as slaves. This did not always imply that indentured servants had any easier lot than their black fellow laborers who were in unredeemable servitude.

The needs were so great and the profits in transporting indentured servants so tempting that a brisk business soon developed in indentures. There came to be four recognized varieties of indentured servant, depending on the nature of their falling into that condition.

"Free willers" were those who deliberately sold themselves under an indenture agreement to colonial plantation owners or colonial companies. Under the terms of agreement, the servant mortgaged his full-time services for a period of five to seven years in exchange for his transportation to the scene of his new labors. When his term of servitude was expired, he then became a free man in the New World and could go and come, do or not do what he liked.

So great were the profits in this part-time slave trade that there came to be a class of indentured servants known as "redemptioners." These were people who were persuaded, duped by professional crimps, into signing indenture papers with sea captains who would carry them overseas. The understanding was that upon arrival the servant would have a stated number of days in which to find a "redeemer"

among the labor-hungry planters, who would buy his papers from the captain. What actually happened was that the captain would not allow his servant to leave the ship, and when the time limit had expired for "redemption," the servant was promptly set upon an auction block and sold, above passage cost usually, to the highest bidder. A good judge of human flesh could make a handsome profit.

Most infamous of all were the "spiriter," or kidnapers as they would be called today, who trafficked in stolen children, usually orphans and street urchins, but any children, preferably over eight years. Younger children they discovered usually died in transit. One of these "spirits," as they called themselves, boasted he had carried away and sold an average of five hundred children a year for a period of twelve years. Another claimed he had handled eight hundred and fifty in a single year. Some conception of the cheapness of human life at this time may be gained from the record of Alice Deakins. She was kidnaped at the age of sixteen from London, but managed to escape and prefer charges against her kidnaper. The culprit was apprehended, tried and convicted. His sentence was a fine of twelve pence! Had he stolen goods to the value of a few shillings, instead of the body of this wretched young girl, he would have been hanged for a felon.

Banishment into exile has always been a popular form of punishment. Under the prevailing circumstances it was only natural that felons of many kinds were transported to the colonial plantation under a similar kind of indenture. From the politically undesirable to criminals, all kinds were

lumped together and sold by their government into seven-year bondage, from which they might never return even at the expiration of their terms.

Naturally the conditions of a servant under indenture on the plantations varied directly with whatever kind of master happened to hold his papers. There was very little or no restraint put upon the master's conduct; all colonial society united to restrain the servant's. Under such circumstances it is no wonder that so many abused their servants abominably and so few extended humane treatment. Some plantation owners possessed as many as fifty indentured at a time under the care of hired overseers. The servants themselves ranged in quality from politically radical intelligentsia, teachers, and professional men to the worst kind of footpad and pimp. An uneven grist for a harsh and brutal mill!

There is no better way of showing the actualities of this system, and what it led to, than in the words of one of them recounting his own adventures.

"In this occasion [on landing] I was also sold as being a servant of the Company in whose service I had come out. But my misfortune was very bad for I fell into the hands of the most cruel tyrant and perfidious man ever born of woman, who was then Governor, or rather Lieutenant-Governor of the island. This man treated me with all the hard usage imaginable, yea, with that of hunger, with which I thought to have perished inevitably. Withal he was willing to let me buy my freedom and liberty, but not under the

rate of 300 pieces of eight, I not being the master of one, at that time, in the whole world. At last through the manifold miseries I endured, as also affliction of mind, I was thrown into a dangerous fit of sickness. This misfortune being added to the rest of my calamities was the cause of my happiness. For my wicked master, seeing my condition, began to fear lest he should lose his moneys with my life. Hereupon he sold me the second time to a surgeon for 70 pieces of eight. Being in the hands of this second master, I began soon after to recover my health through the good usage I received from him, as being much more humane and civil than that of my first patron. He gave me both clothes and very good food and after that I had served him but one year he offered me my liberty, with only this condition, that I should pay him 100 pieces of eight when I was in a capacity of wealth so to do. Which kind proposal of his I could not choose but accept with infinite joy and gratitude of mind.

“Being now at liberty, though like unto Adam, when he was first created by the hand of his Maker—that is, naked and destitute of all human necessities, nor knowing how to get my living—I determined to enter into the wicked order of the Pirates or Robbers at Sea. Into this Society I was received with common consent both of the superior and vulgar sort and amongst them I continued.”

His own experience was as eloquent an account of the conditions of indentured servants as are his comments resulting from observation, especially among the English planters.

“In this country the planters have but very few slaves for want of which they themselves and some servants they have are constrained to do all the drudgery. These servants commonly oblige and bind themselves unto their masters for a space of three years. But their masters, forsaking all conscience and justice, often times traffic with their bodies as with horses at a fair, selling them unto other masters even just as they sell negroes brought from the coast of Guinea [Africa]. Yea to advance this trade, some persons there are who go purposely into France (the same happens in England and other countries), and travelling through the cities, towns and villages endeavour to pick up young men or boys, whom they transport by making them great promises. These being once allured and conveyed into the islands I speak of, they force to work like horses, the toil they impose upon them being much harder than what they usually enjoin unto the negroes, their slaves. For these they endeavour in some manner to preserve, as being their perpetual bondsmen; but as for their white servants, they care not whether they live or die, seeing they are to continue no longer than three years in their service. Besides the hard usage they endure in their diet, apparel and repose, many times they beat them so cruelly that some fall down dead under the hands of their cruel masters. This I have seen with my own eyes, not without grief and regret.

“The planters that inhabit the Caribbee [English] islands are rather worse and more cruel unto their servants. The mildest cruelty they exercise toward them is that when they have served six years of their time (the years they are bound

for among the English being seven complete) they use them with such cruelty as forces them to beg of their masters to sell them unto others, although it be to begin another servitude of seven years. I have known many who after this manner served fifteen or twenty years before they could obtain their freedom. Another thing very rigorous among that nation is a law in those islands whereby if any man owes to another above five and twenty shillings, English money, in case he can not pay, he is liable to be sold for the space of six or eight months."

Indentured service not only led to piracy, but sometimes piracy led back to indentured service again, completing a kind of cycle.

These brief documents show the manner in which this could be accomplished.

"To the Honorable the President and Judges of the Court of Admiralty, for trying of Pyrates, sitting at Cape Corso-Castle the 20th Day of April, 1722

"The humble Petition of Thomas How, Samuel Fletcher, Etc. Humbly sheweth;

"THAT your Petitioners being unhappily and unwarily drawn into that wretched and detestable Crime of Piracy, for which they now stand justly condemned, they most humbly pray the Clemency of the Court, in the Mitigation of their Sentence, that they may be permitted to serve the Royal African Company of England, in this country for seven years, in such manner as the Court shall think proper;

that by their just punishment, being made sensible of the Error of their former Ways, they will for the Future become faithful Subjects, good Servants and useful in their Stations, if it please the Almighty to prolong their Lives.”

“RESOLUTION OF THE COURT

“THAT the Petitioners have leave by this Court of Admiralty, to interchange Indentures with the Captain-General of the Gold Coast, for the Royal African Company, for seven years Servitude, at any of the Royal African Company’s Settlements in Africa, in such manner as he the said Captain-General shall think proper.

“On Thursday the 26th Day of April, the Indentures being all drawn out, according to the Grant made to the Petitioners, by the Court held Friday, the 20th of this Instant, each Prisoner was sent for up, signed sealed and exchanged them in the presence of,

“Capt. Mungo Heardman, Pres., etc.”

A copy of one of the indentures follows:

“THIS Indenture, made the twenty-sixth Day of April, Anno Regis Georgii Magnae Britanniae, Etc. Septimo Domini Millesimo Septcentesimo viginti duo, between THOMAS How, late of Barnstable in Devon, Mariner, of the one part and the Royal African Company of England, their Captain-General and Commander in Chief, for the time being, on the other part. *Witnesseth*, That the said THOMAS How doth hereby covenant and agree to and with the said

Royal African Company, their Captain-General and Commander in Chief for the time begin to serve him or his lawful Successors in any of the Royal African Company's Settlements on the Coast of Africa from the Day of the Date of these Presents, to the full term of Seven Years, from hence next ensuing, fully and to be complete and ended; there to serve in such employment as the said Captain-General or his Successors shall employ him, according to the Custom of the Country in like Kind.

"In Consideration whereof, the said Captain-General and Commander in Chief doth covenant and agree to and with the said THOMAS How to find and allow him Meat, Drink, Apparel and Lodging, according to the Custom of the Country.

"In Witness, whereof, the Parties, aforesaid, to these Presents, have, interchangeably put their Hands and Seals the Day and Year first above-written.

"Signed, sealed and delivered in the Presence of us at Cape Corso-Castle, in Africa, where no stamp'd paper was to be had.

"Mungo Heardman, Pres.

"John Atkins, Regis.

"Witnesses"

The indenture system as a means of stimulating emigration to the New World lasted until indentured white servants became gradually replaced by black African slaves who proved in the long run much more satisfactory, but during the great days of piracy the indenture system was in full

swing and had been for some years. No further elaboration is necessary to show how much this iniquitous program contributed toward piracy. Indentured servants embittered by brutal treatment ran away and became pirates, for want of any other alternative as much as from possible predilection and prior training in robbery. Those who eventually worked out their indentures found themselves freemen to be sure, but placed in unequal competition with bondsmen. A freeman has no fair opportunity in a slave or bond society.

The various riffraff refugees from indentures and the freemen released to unemployment fed another group, which in time added flavor to the stew of piracy. In the middle seventeenth century the West Indies and adjoining mainland developed the buccaneer—a distinctive West Indian product, often confused with pirates so that the terms have been used interchangeably. They shouldn't be, for buccaneers were different—a specialized kind of pirate belonging to a specific time and locality. Buccaneers came about in this fashion. Before there were any recognized settlements of other than Spaniards in the islands, there had arrived a great number of French, Dutch, and English sailors—most of them characters who had left their home country for that country's good. They were not representative of the better levels of French, Dutch, or English society, and at that time the best was none too good. These maritime stragglers, rigidly excluded from Spanish territory, subsisted as best they could among the numberless small and uninhabited islands. They occupied their time hunting. The Spaniards had been conscientious in leaving cattle and pigs run wild

everywhere they went, for these beasts were considered essential in human diet, and who knew when one would be shipwrecked or where. The non-Spanish sea tramps that trickled into the West Indies quickly took advantage of this. They, who were not allowed to live in Spanish colonies, could live out among the islands and on steaks and hams, to be had for the shooting. It was a good, gypsy kind of life. The pleasant climate, fruits, freedom, and the opportunities for a bit of agriculture were attractive. Not having anything resembling refrigeration, they early learned the simple Indian trick of sun-drying—dehydrating meats. The flesh was cut thin and hung in a buccan, or drying house. In a short time it became the consistency of leather, but when boiled resumed at least some of the attributes of meat. They also found that there was a contraband market for the horns, hides, and tallow if they could run them into the Spanish settlements.

The island of Tortuga off the Haitian coast was an especially popular place for buccaneers who at first had a far from formidable reputation. They were just professional hunters, *coureurs de bois*, "mountain men," a little on the uncouth side as are a lot of hunters, professional and otherwise, but a menace to no one. They maintained themselves in sort of households, a buccaneer and his family and entourage of apprentices and servants having a roughly defined hunting ground. Like all in a hunting stage of civilization they could not be gregarious and settle in towns or communities. About the time the English took Jamaica, the Spanish became alarmed at the threat of interlopers. The authorities decided to put an end to these foreign hunter people and sent out

military expeditions. It would be easy to exterminate these scattered bands. But the buccaneers were expert hunters, magnificent marksmen, and, personally, distressingly obstinate and tough. The Spaniards used severity; they got back severity in kind with added embellishments. At each exchange of atrocity the ante mounted until they fought each other like the most bloodthirsty savages. There were more Spaniards and they were better organized, so that eventually the remaining buccaneers took to the sea, and with little love for anything Spanish.

The first of the buccaneers, and the one who set the pattern for harebrained daring and enmity against Spain, was a Norman Frenchman by the name of Pierre le Grand. This single and initial action was in itself enough to deserve his epithet, one worthy of the berserk Norse tradition, and was to find many imitators in the years that followed. Pierre with twenty-eight companion buccaneers set off to sea, expelled from their normal life of cow hunting on Tortuga by the Spaniards. They were out of provisions, out of water, and desperate when they sighted a full-rigged Spanish ship of war, a flagship of the line lumbering back to Spain with the King's treasure. Under oars and sail they overtook it during the night, and so that no one could turn back dismayed at the brashness of his own daring, they scuttled their own boat under them just as they swarmed on board the galleon. Hand to hand with cutlass and pistol they overpowered and captured the treasure ship and its entire crew of several hundred sailors and marines in a furious melee. More prudent than most subsequent buccaneers, these wild-eyed Frenchmen

turned the Spanish captives ashore and then sailed, galleon, treasure and all, back to France where they all retired and lived happily on their investments from then on.

Other buccaneers saw the possibilities in the idea so brilliantly suggested by Pierre le Grand. Revenge plus profit is a doubly powerful incentive, especially when coupled with absence of alternatives. Leaders of very real ability soon appeared among this band of international and double fugitives. They formed themselves into a crude kind of organization known as Brethren of the Coast and dedicated themselves to pillaging anything Spanish whether on land or sea. The predominating tone of these buccaneers was French at first, with smattering of other nationalities included. They bound themselves into a kind of stock company in which each active member received proportional shares of the loot. They devised and held to strict and well-understood rules among themselves. In this respect, they varied from the more dictatorial Elizabethans in their ship's government and set the pattern for the greater epoch of piracy which was to follow them. Bartholomeo Portuguese, Roc Brasiliano, and François L'Ollonais, and their men formed fleets of desperados which terrified all the Spanish colonies and shipping too. Every phase of piracy ever practiced came into their book; interception at sea, amphibious operations in which they reduced fortresses and sacked cities even far inland, actual plunder and ransom, encouraged by revolting tortures, were all in the day's work for them. But they focused their depredations almost exclusively against Spain. They might be called one-directional pirates. Spain devoutly wished they

had had the foresight to allow these lunatic hunters to go on shooting cows in peace on Tortuga. Now they had a hornet's nest buzzing around their ears.

The English Government, vestigial as it was at this time in Jamaica, was quick to realize what these buccaneers were doing to Spanish influence among the islands. They realized, too, that the buccaneers were accumulating a lot of gold and had no place to spend it. In a very short time Port Royal, Jamaica, opened its doors to all visiting buccaneers and earned for itself a reputation as the richest and the wickedest city in the Western world. Buccaneers were no more discriminating in their pleasures than in the manner of their livelihood.

But there are fashions even in human depravity. Relaxing buccaneers behaved in a manner calculated to shock almost anybody. They gorged and drank enormously, brawled and wenched with unedifying gusto, and yet with inhibitions that in the light of all the rest seem quaint. Seventeenth-century moralists, mostly nonresident in Jamaica, have recorded the iniquities of buccaneers with fond detail and, when finally a combined hurricane and earthquake wrecked Port Royal and sank most of it beneath the sea, regarded the calamity as a clear evidence of Divine disapproval. One instance in the catalogue of Port Royal's sins stands out as significant, regarded as it was by the godly of the time as the ultimate in lewdness. One buccaneering captain, far gone in drink and wickedness, paid a "longshore trollop three thousand dollars to dance before him clad only in her shift"—otherwise known as undershirt! Even fellow

roisterers were shocked sober at the unmitigated sinfulness of such immodesty.

One has to remember, in order to appreciate the impact of a scandal like this, that entertainment—even maritime entertainment at this time—was strictly Nordic. Gluttony, drunkenness, murderous brawls and unabashed lust were considered good clean fun, but exhibitionism, the strip tease, was too much even for buccaneers. Such things were tolerated later when entertainment in organized form came under Levantine and Near Eastern influence. There was plenty of tomcat in the seventeenth century; psychoneurotic libido had not been invented.

While Frenchmen were chiefly responsible for the rise of buccaneering, or filibustering, or freebooting, as it was variously called at the time, the English were not slow in joining the informal and profitable war thus waged against Spain. Both France and England in Europe were allied in their enmity against Spanish domination, both were minor powers in comparison. Before long English buccaneers surpassed their French colleagues—Morgan plied in the Caribbean and Isthmus; Dampier harried Spain around the world; Davis, Ringrose, and Swan, with or without French collaborators, did untold damage wherever a Spaniard could be found.

By some curious quirk, paradoxical to the nature of their wild and bloody lives, buccaneers wrote extensively about themselves and their exploits. They were indeed worthy subjects, but writing is an occupation usually reserved for those of more sedentary habits. Members of this strange

fraternity, united only in their love of gold and their hatred of Spain, harried the West Indian possessions of Spain and ventured further afield. Many crossed the Isthmus raiding the Pacific Coast from California to Cape Horn. Some crossed over to Guam, the Philippines, and returned around the world to Europe. But more than the damage they did to Spain, the information these buccaneers acquired and published, about sailing conditions, geography, and new lands, stimulated Spain's enemies and competitors.

One literary buccaneer writing of the West Indies was John (A. O.) Esquemeling, a Dutchman who had served under the great Henry Morgan on many of his spectacular exploits. Like so many authors who selected malefactors as their subject, almost nothing is known about John Esquemeling himself, except he knew a lot—perhaps too much—about buccaneering. He was a buccaneer himself until he either saw the light or made enough to retire from the hazardous business. *The History of the Buccaneers*, first published in Amsterdam in 1678, was a topical, unscholarly little volume written in Dutch. Whatever the best-seller lists of the seventeenth century were, *The History of the Buccaneers* hit it. The book was an instant success and immediately became translated into Spanish, French, and English. Even today despite the quaint phraseology and moralistic platitudes of this reformed (?) buccaneer, it is good reading. It is a mine of information on the West Indies, then little known to Europeans. The biographies of celebrated buccaneering leaders, their exploits, daring and regrettable habits are fully treated. But Esquemeling had his “formula”—he

was shrewd enough to realize the safety of apparent penitence and the appeal of sensational atrocity. He had abundant raw material to work with; no doubt, also, he made the best of it.

Esquemeling has probably rated Henry Morgan the greatest buccaneer of them all, higher in infamy than his deserts. He deserved an abundance but received perhaps too much. There is no doubt that this daring and able Welshman was a hard character and scrupulous about nothing. But he was not quite as black as Esquemeling has painted him. He came from a good family, fought the Spaniards under at least some kind of military commission, and was uniformly successful. He made a lot of money and must have had some peculiar qualities of character that won him recognition and respect among such a ragtag and bobtail crew of cutthroats as served under him. In him must have been remarkable qualities of leadership as well as courage, ingenuity, and astonishing animal vitality. His exploits are too well known to warrant recitation, but his character could well be re-appraised. It is doubtful if Henry Morgan was more of a scoundrel than the rest of his Jamaican contemporaries. This is not saying much, but, after all, there is no fairer comparison for judgment. Morgan was much admired in the England of his time. The way he had consistently harried the Spaniards in the New World, the plunder he won from them and thereby deflected from financing Spain's European wars, and his own harebrained bravery were loudly praised. The English public was not overly scrupulous at this time. If he was cruel, so were his enemies.

Furthermore, as Cromwell pointed out in this connection, "The Lord himself hath a controversy with our enemies; even with the Romish Babylon of which the Spaniard is the great under-propper. In that respect we fight the Lord's battles."

But the balance of European power in Europe gradually shifted. Spain declined, while France ascended. England, long following the well-established policy of shifting her weight to preserve the equilibrium, no longer sided with France. France and England had had common cause against the power of Spain. Now that Spain declined, France allied herself with the former enemy, and England fought the coalition. Correspondingly French and English buccaneers, formerly colleagues in bothering Spain, were solicited to join their respective navies as orthodox fighting sailors and to fight each other.

The European population of the West Indies, turbulent as it was, had now grown to include representatives in great numbers of the three leading powers of Europe. As the well buckets of European power-politics in Europe changed relative position, so did their compatriots on the frontier of the Caribbean. Buccaneering, which arose as spontaneous, unsponsored reaction against Spain by French and English, became first quasi recognized by their respective crowns, then fully recognized but deflected to serve other national policies at home. The buccaneers became finally incorporated in the legitimate fighting forces of France and England and as ruffian Brethren of the Coast ceased to exist.



CHAPTER THREE

The Spanish Plate

THE OUTBREAK of the War of the Spanish Succession marked the end of buccaneering in the West Indies. Not that any soul's awakening took place in the buccaneering bosom, the times simply changed. With a full scale official war on, there was abundant and legal employment for the really first-class fighting men who formerly ran warfare as a private plundering business. It could be official now and under government sanction, which meant the risks of being hanged were reduced while the profit remained just as great.

England, aided by Austria and assorted German and Dutch principalities, fought it out with France and Spain ostensibly about who was going to be the next king of Spain. Louis XIV and a succession of able marshals fought John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, and Prince Eugene of Savoy for an indecisive generation back and forth across the Low Countries. Flanders always seems to have been the traditional European cockpit; no matter who was fighting whom and for what, this was the stadium. Place names like Mons, Liège, Arras, Dunkerque and Namur have a familiar ring even in more recent history.

A curious circumstance in this war was that Prince Eugene was fighting his father, Louis XIV. Eugene, eldest of Louis' bastard children, had displeased his father. In this age of elegance, especially among those of position, Louis was repelled by this earliest of his biological experiments. Prince Eugene had turned out to be the ablest, homeliest, and dirtiest nobleman in Europe. Louis who could forgive everything else could not stand his looks and turned away his own well-chiseled features. Stub-nosed Eugene never forgave him and hounded him to the end of his days.

France was not especially wealthy at this time, but Spain, her ally, was. Austria was reasonably well to do, but England wasn't. England had to bear the brunt of the maritime action of the war, and the British fleet was not in good condition. Shrewdly enough the English Crown saw the military advantages of privateering and withdrew the royal prerogative of one-fifth share in the proceeds. Henceforward private men-of-war could keep for themselves all they plundered. Bristol and London merchants were not slow in availing themselves of this kind of profiteering and private warships multiplied, prospered, and grew strong. They sailed around the world catching and plundering the ships of France and Spain, making money hand over fist as well as crippling the fighting power of the opposition. The Royal Navy needed men to sail their ships. The privateers needed men. Sailors were in great demand, in fact at a premium. Prisons were emptied into the fleet; press gangs roamed the city slums, sandbagging likely looking lads and hauling them bodily on

board. Anybody and everybody was welcomed in the rush for maritime man power.

Press gangs were the traditional and quite legal means of recruiting. If a ship in port needed men they landed a midshipman with a half-dozen jolly sailors. The squad, cudgel in hand, prowled the streets on the hunt. As soon as they had flushed a stalwart-looking male they gave chase, knocked him over the head and bore him off. The recruit might be just off another ship, might be a tinker or tailor, or visiting farmer, they were not particular. Under the Defence of the Realm Acts anyone was subject to service. At least there was little red tape in this manner of conscription, and it was a direct and highly personal matter. There is still in England nothing illegal in press gangs. The Royal Navy could still recruit this way, but probably will never avail itself of the prerogative.

Before the war ended, or rather paused due to mutual exhaustion, the regular navy and privateer fleets of England, France, and Holland had reached proportions never known before. There were hundreds of armed ships afloat, manned by thousands of seasoned and well-skilled fighting men, in European waters and especially in the West Indies. The real prizes were in the Caribbean along the route of the already famous Spanish Plate Fleet. One side strove to bring this annual flotilla safely home; the other tried to intercept it. The one hundred million dollars in its cargo was worth a lot of trouble to protect or to plunder.

The Treaty of Utrecht ended the formal hostilities in

1713 and in so doing automatically opened the greatest era of general all-round piracy the world has ever known, the golden and classical age of pirates. There were a few who saw it coming, but most regarded the upswing of maritime lawlessness as an unaccountable phenomenon arising from general godlessness and human perversity alone.

When the war ended, naturally all nations disbanded their fighting fleets. The warships were put in moth balls, tied up, decommissioned, and the men uncereemoniously set ashore. Many had not been on shore for years and were afraid of it. All during the war sailors were not allowed shore leave. They deserted instantly if given the slightest opportunity, or would be impressed by the crew of another ship. Officers came and went, but the common seamen simply stayed on the vessel year in and year out. In order to keep up morale when in port the essential beverages and feminine society were introduced on board. Descriptions have come down to us of the nature of the 'tween decks of a British warship when in port, which lead one to believe that the cultural and educational aspects could have been improved.

The seaport towns and cities of Europe and the West Indies teemed with stragglers, begging sailors, looking for work—and for ships. Under the closely guarded guild system, the crafts they could have learned were not open to sailors. If a man were a sailor he had to remain a sailor. God had put folk into their place in society and there they must stay. No ship prepared for sea without five times the needed personnel swarming for berths. Merchant skippers shrewdly saw added profit in this situation and cut wages to the bone.

Sailors could be had for the food alone, bad as it was. Grumble as they might, the unemployed had to take it or starve, for there was no governmental or other provision made for them.

Only the Dutch were intelligent enough to see that war would soon break out again and that they would soon need fighting sailors. They subsidized the fishing fleet and found peaceful employment for their men. And it is significant that in the period that followed there is no mention of a Dutch pirate ship.

There were other sequelae to this Peace of Utrecht which swelled the total trend toward piracy. Jamaica became legally attached to the British Crown. On top of this the grant of the Assiento, or contract for supplying slaves to Spanish America, was given to the Royal African Company of England for a period of thirty years. Jamaica became the headquarters of the British slave trade, the greatest human stockyard in the world. Its plantations under black slave labor were prospering mightily, too.

Jamaica had provided fleets of privateers during the war and like everyone else now had troops of unemployed sailors ashore. Moreover these particular privateersmen with a buccaneering tradition only a generation behind them were not especially scrupulous about what they did next.

There was a lot of ill feeling still against Spain; the memory of grievances die slowly. The Spanish themselves even after the Peace did little to allow this memory to dim. According to Spanish colonial policy no non-Spaniard could trade in Spanish America. Not only that but no foreign ship

could approach within fifteen miles of Spanish land. The condition of the Spanish Navy after the war was so feeble they employed anyone of any nationality as coastguardsmen, usually Irish or Frenchmen. It was not easy to get through the West Indies without getting within fifteen miles of something Spanish, navigation being so primitive no one was ever sure quite where he was anyway. Coastguards obtained a bounty on all interlopers they caught. It all added up to more grievances against Spain. The feeling against Spain, always high, ran higher especially on Jamaica. Then too there was the annual temptation of the Plate Fleet, a temptation to make vengeance remunerative in the bargain.

Spain's administration of its gigantic American empire was altogether remarkably efficient and capable, considering the obstacles that confronted them. The distances were tremendous, communication slow and wholly unreliable. A letter or official dispatch might take half a year to reach its destination—or it might just as likely never get there at all. Spain had to pioneer in colonial policies; there was little or no precedent in the experience of other nations to show the way. We can now, in the light of aftertime, see all the manifold mistakes, injustices and cruelties; but such appraisal is worthless. An infinitely small number of conquerors took, held, and administered a hemisphere on the opposite side of the world.

The artery, the connecting link between home and colony, was the annual Plate Fleet. This flotilla brought personnel, instructions, European goods from Spain to the New World;

it returned with the royal revenue, collected from all the scattered outposts of this new empire. The route from Spain followed the course originally set down by Columbus. Due westward from the Canary or Cape Verde Islands prevailing easterly winds brought the ships to landfall, usually in the neighborhood of the Barbados. From thence, with landmarks to give direction, the vessels sailed along the South American coast. At Rio de la Hacha, in what is now Colombia, the galleons sent word ashore that they had arrived. At once messengers were sent posting overland to Lima, Cartagena, and Panama with the news. The King's revenue which had been accumulating all year was freighted to Cartagena and prepared for transshipment. The fleet sailed on slowly and anchored at Cartagena. This city is the finest example in the Western Hemisphere of a fully walled city. It was the repository, treasure house of the royal income. In these turbulent times it had to be well defended. Even now the massive walls, pierced and loopholed for cannon and small arms, moated and in places forty feet thick in solid masonry, are a wonder of engineering. The situation was naturally defensible. Forts flanked the narrow entrance channel presenting an enfilading fire. Impenetrable mangrove swamps or open shelterless beaches surrounded the city. The city itself was a huge fortress, a perfect example of the best military architecture of the time. Just the same, Drake had landed and sacked the city once, buccaneers had taken it twice more in its brief history. Every time its fortifications had been rebuilt and strengthened. When the King's annual revenue was collected there, it was a payroll worth stealing.

Now only a major military campaign, a full-scale amphibious assault, could hope to plunder the city.

While most of the ships discharged cargo here and loaded on the return cargo of gold, one of the vessels was detached and sailed for Porto Bello to pick up the quota from Panama and the cities of the Isthmus. This ship returned when freighted and rejoined the convoy at Cartagena. There was naturally no fixed calendar schedule, since in these big sailing ships they never knew exactly when they would reach anywhere. It took, however, about sixty days before the now-laden convoy was ready to leave Cartagena for Havana. At the same time Vera Cruz in Mexico sent out their smaller flotilla similarly loaded and so timed they would all make rendezvous at Havana. The Mexican contingent bore not only the Mexican bullion which was always considerable but also the revenue from further distant Manila in the Philippines. Every year one or two galleons carried the Philippine portion of the annual treasure from Manila to Acapulco, the best west coast port of Mexico, from here it was transshipped overland to Vera Cruz. The final total, an impressive sum carried in a heavily armed, convoyed and well-manned fleet made ready at Havana for the transatlantic voyage. When the time came the fleet sailed northward with the Gulf Stream up the passage between Florida and the Bahamas and took the northern route back to Spain.

Everybody knew all about the habits of the justly famous Plate Fleet. For years it had been a buccaneering convention to trail this mighty squadron in the hopes of picking

off a straggler. The strength of the flotilla was well known too. Even for the most desperate and well-equipped this was a tough proposition.

But one year, 1714, the Plate Fleet ran into bad luck—or poor judgment. It might have been either or both. Weather forecasting at this time was restricted to the knowledge that one's corns hurt before a storm. Meteorology was not yet more exact. Anyway the Plate Fleet, loaded to the gunwales, set out from Havana just in time to run head on into a hurricane of impressive proportions. Seamanship, profanity and patron saints were powerless to avert catastrophe. The great flotilla was driven ashore on the reef-ridden tip of Florida and completely wrecked. The few sailors cast ashore were promptly eaten by the Indians who had a taste for such things, perhaps in contrast to their otherwise monotonous diet of shellfish. The Plate Fleet for that year with all its treasure was totally wrecked.

But the Viceroy at Havana, a conscientious man, vowed that his royal master would not lose his income. A salvage and diving crew were immediately dispatched, along with a military guard of sixty soldiers, to dredge up what could be saved from the wrecks. The soldiers established camp ashore to guard the divers against hungry Indians; the divers went to work on the wrecks taking their own chances with the equally hungry sharks, and barracuda. The water was fairly shoal, but they had no diving equipment except small boats and swimmers who could stay under only as long as their breath lasted. Every day they brought a bit of the treasure up and deposited it in their camp ashore.

Operations were going smoothly and it looked as though probably the major part of the sunken treasure would be recovered when word got around through the West Indian islands about what had happened. Treasure stories travel fast, especially when the island teemed with so many unemployed and destitute sailors.

A former privateersman, Henry Jennings, known from then on as "he who lifted the Spanish Plate," is generally credited with being the first to see the possibilities in this wreck and subsequent salvage. Jennings was a resident of Jamaica, from whence he had privateered successfully during the late war and where he was now "beached" and wondering what to do next. He discussed his plan with various broad-minded merchants of Jamaica, obtained the necessary capital for his venture, and then going around among his acquaintances of former days recruited some three hundred seasoned men to help him. This motley crew sailed away from Jamaica in three small ships and made directly for the Gulf of Florida. Just because it was time of official peace between England and Spain did not disturb the elastic conscience of Captain Jennings.

Jennings and his men swooped down upon the busy salvagers, drove the little Spanish garrison, hopelessly outnumbered, into the woods and sailed away again with three hundred thousand pieces of eight. One thousand dollars, more or less, apiece and that for a few days' agreeable work appealed to all as attractive and illuminating, especially in view of the long months just spent half-starved and wholly hopeless on the Jamaican water front.

On the way back to Jamaica they happened to spy a prosperous Spanish merchant ship. "In for a penny, in for a pound," they bore down upon the unsuspecting mariner, clapped him aboard, and plundered his vessel to the tune of several thousand additional pieces of eight and a lot of merchandise that would find ready market at home. But the Spanish captain, shocked and painfully surprised at his treatment, sailed his looted vessel after them, for Jennings had had no use for either his ship or his person. He saw Jennings and his fleet sail into Jamaica amid the rejoicing of the Jamaicans. Then he turned back toward Havana. The Viceroy was going to hear all about this.

The Viceroy had already heard plenty by the time the pilaged merchantman arrived. Diplomacy between Havana and Jamaica buzzed like a fuse.

The Viceroy presented his respectful compliments to His Britannic Majesty's Governor of Jamaica. Thus and so had happened in direct violation of everything written in the book. If the Governor did not see fit to hang the culprits right away, he, the Viceroy, would hang any Englishman he could lay hands on. He cited a number of English merchants resident in Havana suitable for his purpose.

"Reply by return messenger. May God protect you. I kiss your hand.—The Viceroy"

The Governor saluted the Viceroy. Nobody in Jamaica knew anything about anybody. Possibly there had been a regrettable error in the shipping department. Steps would be taken. Meanwhile, if his excellence was pleased to start

hanging Englishmen, he, the Governor, would be equally pleased to flog the daylights out of a specified number of Spaniards then in residence in Jamaica. He remained (so he said), "Your Humble and Obedient Serv't."

It was courteous, every punctilio observed, and all as deadly as poison. Too many injuries had been exchanged too often of late years to allow for more than the shell of polite conventions.

Jennings and his men, meanwhile, had landed in triumph in Jamaica and had instantly become the envy of all waterfront riffraff, the darlings of the saloonkeepers.

Speaking behind his hand the Royal Governor informed the sponsoring merchants, and they in turn passed the word to Jennings. Jennings, if he were smart, would oblige and betake himself elsewhere. After he had sold off his plundered goods at auction, Jennings and his little fleet sailed away.

Just as the Royal Governor and the Jamaican merchants were congratulating themselves on their own finesse and adroitness in avoiding diplomatic awkwardnesses, a Jamaican merchant vessel which had sailed a few days before unexpectedly returned to port. The skipper and his crew were naked, and the ship was as empty as an eggshell. Both had been stripped of everything but the hope of eternal salvation. Jennings and his outbound scalawags had overtaken them.

This was different. Plundering Spaniards was one thing but plundering fellow Englishmen—this, by Gad, was piracy! But it was too late. Much too late. The great days of piracy in the West Indies had begun.

Jennings and his men saw no particular difference between

plundering Spaniards—or anyone else. First come, first served—who were they to be partial? After they had looted their fellow Jamaican they proceeded cruising along the Bay of Campeche. There might be pickings of some kind there. And there were, but not what they expected.

The Viceroy of Havana with commendable promptness had dispatched a small squadron to find Jennings. These Spanish ships cruising along the coast had spotted a band of English logwood cutters going about their business on the beach. Logwood, so called because it was shipped in the log, was a dense, heavy red wood that yielded black, brown, or blue dyes important in calico printing. Its harvest formed one of the few honest occupations of the English colonists. They were chopping on Spanish territory to be sure, but that was a matter of small consequence.

The Spanish patrol vessels descended upon this logwood camp and drove the lumbermen into the woods. Then since the Spaniards could not catch and hang the lumbermen as they wished, they contented themselves with burning their boats. When Jennings hove in sight a few days afterward the logwood cutters were stranded and in sore straits. They were marooned on a wild tropical shore infested with Indians.

Jennings offered rescue if they would join with him and go a-pirating. If they did not want to go “on the account,” they might stay where they were. This piece of applied psychology worked perfectly. All the stranded logwood cutters were only too happy to turn pirate and get away from the place. Jennings’s crew doubled their numbers. Their little

ships were bulging with men. The next ship they caught they added to their fleet. Before long they had grown into a small navy, too big for the type of work they had in mind. They split their forces and parted company.

This exploit and its success became known in short time throughout the entire West Indies. Those who could, hastened to join Jennings's company, merchant sailors at sea mutinied and turned pirate by the score, all who could steal a ship did so and set out on their own account.

Never in human history had the times been more favorable for the rise of piracy; no other place on earth could have been better suited than the West Indies for that kind of life. Piracy, as Jennings and those who followed his example practiced it, was armed plundering of ships of all nations upon the high seas. Ransom was not a feature of this type of piracy, neither were amphibious operations against cities and inland strongholds, as was the manner of the earlier buccaneers. The highwaymen prevalent in England at this time, the "High Toby and the Road," found their counterpart in the seafaring robbers of the Caribbean.

The topography of the West Indian islands could not have been better designed for this kind of piracy. The thousands of islands, great and small, that dotted the warm sea created lurking places, refuges and ambush possibilities without number. The islands were for the most part fertile and supplied the always necessary wood and water. Long voyages were unnecessary, and the pleasant climate permitted camping out ashore at night any time it might be convenient. Food was abundant on these islands and, while not always

suited to the European palate of the time, was always available and nourishing. The seas in and among the islands were beset by currents, shoals and reefs which made the navigation tricky, but more dangerous for tall ships than for the small craft that pirates generally employed. The "worm," and barnacles and weeds on the ship's bottoms grew so swiftly in these warm waters that two or three times a year it became necessary to careen and clean vessels. Coves and sheltered beaches were so prevalent a feature of the islands that there was never any trouble to find a good place to attend to this requirement.

The trade wind blew steady and dependably and could always be counted on; the Gulf Stream and its course were already well known as an aid to navigation. Every summer came the hurricane season which rendered sailing through the islands dangerous. But at that season, too, the weather was uncomfortably hot and the ever-present malaria and yellow fever increased, making life uncomfortable anyway. Pirates, free-roving through the Caribbean, adjusted their habits to these conditions and during the summer moved their depredations northward up the Atlantic coastal colonies, even as far as the English colony of Newfoundland. There was plenty of seagoing prey for them to batten on, either in their summer hunting grounds of the Atlantic Coast or their winter habitat of the West Indian islands.

There had been a postwar boom in the shipping business following the Peace of Utrecht. Sugar was the principal product of the West Indies and the chief source of supply for Europe. The cane plantations flourished. Dyestuffs, rice,

and tobacco were in great European demand, and their cultivation prospered also. But the very fact that these single-crop economies prospered, so dissuaded legitimate colonists from any great diversity of other products. It was more economical for a planter to raise and export just one thing, and in exchange bring back from Europe the manufactured goods he needed for his convenience and comfort. Contrary to the general impression, little actual money in specie went back and forth between the West Indies and Europe, except under the powerful guns of the Plate Fleet, but quantities of goods flowed in both directions. This merchant shipping had reached great proportions, increasing as the prosperity of the plantations increased.

At the same time the Spanish colonies were under heavy governmental restriction. Spanish colonies were not permitted to buy other than Spanish goods, brought to them in Spanish ships. Spanish merchant shipping was wholly inadequate to meet the demand. The Spanish colonists were commodity starved in consequence. Jennings and his pirates discovered that it was both easy and profitable to bring a captured shipload of European clothes, for example, to an out of the way seaport of Spanish Cuba and there sell them to the natives, who wanted them so badly they neglected to call the attention of their own authorities to the irregular manner of the transactions. Piracy, thus compounded with smuggling—"interloping" as they called it—found a ready supply of goods in the shipping between the plantations and Europe, available for the stealing, and an excellent market

to dispose of their plunder in the Spanish colonies which were glad to co-operate.

The West Indies were in the full swing of frontier conditions of morals, or rather the lack of them, regarding the sanctity of "mine and thine." English and French colonies of the better organized and established kind were still sufficiently lax regarding judicial discipline that they very frequently and knowingly trafficked with pirates when there was a penny to be earned by so doing. Pirate plunder was frequently run ashore in quiet coves at night all the way from Charleston to Boston and bought up cheap by otherwise upright and God-fearing businessmen. "Trafficking with the Devil" has never held its own as a theoretical principle against twenty per cent on a sound investment. All conditions favored piracy and very little appeared as hindrance.

Jennings' original band grew, divided, then both halves grew and divided again, proliferating like the fission of single-celled organisms. Imitators were not slow in following Jennings' example. From an infinitely small start and no capital it was possible for any bold and desperate fellow to set off a-pirating. A half dozen escaped bondsmen, ex-convicts, or just stranded sailors could steal a fishing smack and a stock of small arms and set out. The first ship they took would be better suited to their work and they could also augment their numbers easily enough because an honest sailor's work was so poorly paid and his treatment so brutal it did not take much to win him over to piracy. Merchant ships habitually carried just as small crews as they dared in

order to save wages. Against a pirate with double or treble the number of men, they stood little chance.

Furthermore, pirates, being for the most part ex-common sailors themselves, were sympathetic toward merchant fore-castle hands. The merchant hands knew this and seldom offered any show of resistance, let the skipper shout and bellow as he would. They were just working there; why should they risk injury for someone else's property? Oftentimes when a merchant skipper had been particularly hard, his men not only failed to resist pirates, but would complain to their pirate-captors. The skipper would then find his position in society very literally reversed. He would be trussed over a gun carriage and be beaten with unforgettable enthusiasm by all his former hands. Merchant skippers had several reasons for disliking pirates and, unless their stories differed from all maritime traditions, made the most of their escapades when they got back home, minus cargo and with a marked preference for eating standing up.

Merchants complained bitterly at this swift resurgence of piracy and demanded the protection of the Royal Navy. The Royal Navy forwarded its best and biggest battleships to the West Indies, a whole squadron of them. They were formidable in formal battle, but so slow they seldom even saw a pirate. Their officers, who held piracy in deserved contempt, paid little attention to piratical habits, with the result that they cruised the West Indies in the summer when piratical activity had shifted to the Atlantic Coast, and in the winter sailed north and laid up their battleships for the duration of the cold weather. Where they came from,

one simply did not fight in the wintertime; it was too cold.

Pirates became so numerous and prosperous that Jennings and his followers felt the need of some kind of a land base for their operations where they could establish a regular retreat, have repair facilities and recreational opportunities, apart from more formal settlements. He decided in favor of the Bahamas, the island of New Providence, then deserted, as a proper location. Other pirates joined him here and in a matter of months New Providence became a large and tumultuous colony. Each crew maintained its entity as a crew, the administration of affairs, such as they were, were managed by a council of whatever captains were in port at the time. From this originated the Pirate Republic of New Providence.



CHAPTER FOUR

Pirate Republic

ALTHOUGH the Bahamas were the first landfall of Columbus' initial voyage, the first-known segment of the Western Hemisphere, they had never been the site of any very permanent European settlement. They are a complex of a number of low-lying islands surrounded by shoals and reefs, with a fertile soil and glorious climate, but little else.

Spain claimed title first, as she did to almost all the hemisphere, but did little about effecting any settlement. She kidnaped and removed all the aborigines to work the Cuban and Haitian mines and then abandoned the place. Nearly two hundred years later a company was formed in London for the permanent settlement of the islands. The Company of Eleutherian Adventurers, taking their name from one of the islands, *Isla de Terra*, which they promptly improved into "Eleuthera," obtained a grant from Charles I of England, who had no conceivable title to the property. At this time whenever two or three men were gathered together in London they formed a stock company of one kind or another for the exploitation of the new lands across the sea.

The Adventurers tried settling on Eleuthera for a while but soon abandoned it for the more prepossessing island of New Providence, which was equipped with a splendid harbor. In fact, of all the many islands, New Providence was the best suited for colonizing. The Spanish authorities did not protest too vigorously. After all, they knew there was little money to be had there, a fact which the Adventurers soon discovered for themselves. But before long Spain and England were at war again and the echoes of the conflict were heard in their respective West Indian colonies. The Spanish landed a force at New Providence and drove off the English settlers, who came back after the dust had settled; for the Spaniards didn't want the place, they simply wanted to annoy the English. A few years later France and Spain were at war with England. This time a combined force of French and Spanish raided the island and left it totally depopulated. The Adventurers had had enough this time and abandoned the islands, too.

Henry Jennings and his pirate followers, looking around for a place to settle down—"a retreat and general receptacle" for their piratical business—found here exactly what they had been looking for, especially the island of New Providence with its harbor, the site of present-day Nassau. New Providence is a good-sized island, some 28 by 11 miles in area, well-wooded and fertile, and, although lacking streams of any kind, had an abundance of fresh-water wells. There were fruits in quantity, fish and turtle to be had for the catching. On that and the neighboring islands hogs and cattle ran wild and would provide all the fresh meat they

needed. The climate was healthy and always temperate.

The geography of New Providence placed it directly athwart the Florida Straits, through which European-bound commerce passed. A short distance eastward lay the route of the ships from Europe. The island was well placed between the two ship lanes, eastbound and westbound. For the pirate business the island was well suited. The harbor could accommodate five hundred of their little vessels easily and was, at the same time, too shallow for the ships of the line of the Royal Navy who were hunting them. The harbor mouth was divided by an island into two inlets. With two holes to their burrow, it would require two warships working together to bottle them up; they could always slip away from a single ship.

There was no one in possession when they landed. There were the ruins of the Adventurers' attempted settlement, the wreck of the little fort at the harbor mouth and that was all. Only one person lived there in the ruins. "Governor Sawney" they called him, a poor half-mad creature, relic of former occupation. The pirates amused themselves by calling the poor hermit "Governor" and paid him mock deference.

Jennings and his entourage settled themselves down on the land adjoining the harbor, as a base for further piratical operations. Other pirates under their own captains joined them. Camp followers and all manner of outcast hangers-on were attracted to the place and in a very short time a curious kind of amphibious gypsy camp established itself. Pirate ships could come and go at will. Here they brought in their

prizes and auctioned off their stolen cargoes to the traders who found their profits in marketing stolen goods. Smugglers appeared to run the merchandise to the Carolinas or other plantation markets. All the facilities sprang up almost spontaneously for the piratical recreation in feminine or liquid form. Looted naval stores, sails, pitch, tallow and cordage could here be traded with fellow pirates. There was excellent opportunity in the shallow harbor to carcen and clean their ships, and in perfect safety. Inside of a year from the time Jennings first set foot on the deserted island of New Providence, it had become a bustling and busy colony of between two and three thousand people, in the proportion of two-thirds practicing pirates and one-third hangers-on.

The pirate land base on New Providence bore closer resemblance to a marine hobo jungle than to any more orthodox community. It was no city of homes; it was a place of temporary sojourn and refreshment for a literally floating population. The only permanent residents were the piratical camp followers, the traders, and the hangers-on; all others were transient. The shanty town of improvised tents and palm-leaf shelters would have been squalid had it not been for the almost incredible beauty of the island. Nature had made it paradise and man did his best to make a limbo of it. On the brilliant blue waters of the harbor floated the pirates' ships, small sloops with an occasional larger ship belonging to a more prosperous and successful pirate crew among them. But all the vessels were dirty, poorly kept, unpainted and battered. There was no point in wasting time scouring decks and keeping a taut ship. When a pirate's

ship went out of repair they exchanged it with the next one they captured. The settlement ashore had the same slovenly air about it. The glaring white coral sands on the harbor edge formed a white band contrasting with the dense dark green of the forest background. Crude tents, carelessly improvised from discarded sails, shacks of driftwood thatched with palm fronds, all hovels, were scattered in the margin of the wood in disordered array. All were surrounded by refuse, castoff scraps of timbers, old rags, bottles and broken casks, and offal from the cook pots set on open campfires on the sand. In and among them slatternly women screamed at one another as they did the minimum of necessary work, preparing food, mending the ragged motley clothes that, being stolen, had had such various origins they would have been grotesque in any other setting. Half-naked brats, dogs, and buzzards quarreled among the offal heaps. But for the cleansing qualities of the brilliant sunshine and the firm, strong breath of the trade winds the stench would have been intolerable, even to nostrils hardened in the seaport slums. What men happened to be ashore lounged in net hammocks in the shade, or clustered in little clumps drinking or gambling.

This was a refuge area, as it is generally termed, and as such had all the peculiarities that characterize an outlaw colony. There are outlaw colonies today, refuge areas where those rejected by the society of their fellow men associate and again set up some rude semblance of the society that had rejected them. There is, or was until late years, one that flourished in a remote fastness of the Rocky Moun-

tains, in a blind canyon miles away from any other habitation. Cattle rustlers and horse thieves had congregated there where they were safer from the law than elsewhere, but they had to stay there if they wished to retain even this shadow of liberty. The same slovenly transient quality prevailed, the same pretense at dingy finery. And, moreover, the same mutual suspicion. Each person kept himself a little to himself. There were no full-hearted confidences. It was dangerous for anyone to know too much. There was no gossip; interest in another's affairs might attract unwelcome attention to your own.

Outlaws by the very nature of their name are not expected to have laws themselves. Yet any body of people congregated for mutual benefit are automatically obliged to provide for themselves some kind of government. If they reject or are rejected by some existing form of organized government, they are at once placed under the necessity of concocting one for themselves. Politics is the common denominator by which men are able to live together.

There is a Spanish proverb, popular in England during the eighteenth century, to the effect that if a thief and a hermit live together you will soon find either two hermits or a pair of thieves. This was quite as true of pirates as of any other less publicized and dramatic kind of society.

At first it is difficult to see from whence eighteenth-century pirates obtained the idea of democratic procedure they so uniformly adopted in governing their communal life. Certainly not from their home background of Europe where, with the limited exception of England, all govern-

ments were monarchies, absolute and *jure divino*. It is too much to think they, who were common sailors of humble intellectual opportunities, could have conjured up their democratic concept of politics on purely philosophical grounds. The simplest solution is sometimes the best. Without necessarily any connection with established precedent, perhaps they were doing "what came naturally."

For a long time it was and, in fact, in some quarters still is a matter of surprise and incredulity that pirates were politically democratic. The phrase "pirate king" was often used in much the same way the elected chiefs among the American Indians were called "kings." European observers had no other frame of reference in which to classify than that familiar to them.

If precedent were essential in the pirates' concept of their democratic self-government, they might or might not have derived the idea from privateers, for pirates and privateers were usually interchangeable. A pirate one day, as can be seen from the foregoing, might be a wholly legal privateer the next, and vice versa. And privateers were little more than seagoing stock companies, in their turn derived from the land-bound stock company ashore.

In fact, the democratic kind of self-government that distinguished pirates was their own worst enemy. Loosely led by readily removable authority, discipline never attained among them the crisp, decisive character required for success in military operations. Their successes were more frequently the result of good luck than clear, well-calculated

judgment backed by efficient, concerted action. They never seemed to be the closely knit, well-co-ordinated organization operating efficiently along well-thought-out and directed lines. If for no other reason this most democratic character of un-discipline set them at great disadvantage when faced with despotically led opposition of established governments.

Apparently, some pirates at least realized that their organization had the potentiality of developing into less democratic and more authoritarian lines. The following verbatim extract from a speech at a pirate entertainment, made in jest but with suggestion of earnestness, and certainly a clear if cynical insight on political history, will indicate their manner of thought:

"I am, it is true, by birth the son of a miller, but I have ambition, avarice and learning enough to be a secretary of state, for I was a servitor at Oxford before I turned stroller [play actor] and if you think fit to erect this tract of land into an empire and your joint imperial majesties will employ my abilities, don't question but I will prove a true patriot, that is by the figure I will make, I will be a credit to your court, and by the squeezing of your subjects (whom, under the specious pretence of liberty, I will keep in abject slavery) drain such sums as shall ever keep them poor and your and my treasury full. Rome, the mistress of the world, was founded by a couple of sheep-stealers, and peopled by runaway slaves and insolvent debtors. How much more advan-

tageously might you undertake the erection of a new monarchy whose subjects are no strangers to the arts of war, who are not environed, as they were, with invidious neighbors, and who may increase your powers and propagate the species by taking into your protection the Indians of these parts and the discontented and desperate people of the neighboring English and French colonies? To strengthen yourselves, raise every useful man to some dignity in the state and share the prisoners (I mean such as won't swear allegiance) as so many slaves unworthy of liberty among your great men; build more vessels, keep them constantly on the cruise, and force all the prisoners either by fair or foul [means] to acknowledge your sovereignty; it was thus the greatest empires of the world were founded. Superior force was always acknowledged a just title, and the ancients ever esteemed the prisoners they made, whose lives were in their power by right of arms, lawful slaves, and employed their lives in the service of the conqueror, but a grateful retribution for the preserving of them. I leave it to the mature deliberation of your great wisdom whether it is not more eligible to found here an empire, and make war by a lawful authority derived from your royal selves, than lie under the opprobrious appellations of robbers, thieves, profligate rogues and pirates—for begging pardon of your majesties for that freedom of speech, which my zeal for your royal service and the public good oblige me to, the world treats you and your loyal subjects with no softer terms. But, when you have once declared yourselves lawful monarchs, and that you have strength enough to defend your title, all the universities in the world will de-

clare you have a right, *jure divino*, and the kings and princes of the earth will send their ambassadors to court your alliance."

A pirate captain by the name of Charles Bellamy expressed a similar political ideology in terms that have lost nothing of their original vigor of expression even after two hundred years. The pirate was explaining the refusal of his crew to restore a looted prize to its rightful captain.

"Damn my blood, I am sorry they won't let you have your sloop again, for I scorn to do any one a mischief when it is not for my advantage. Damn the sloop, we must sink her and she might be of use to you. Though, Damn ye, you are a sneaking puppy, and so are all those who submit to be governed by laws which rich men have made for their own security, for the cowardly whelps have not the courage otherwise to defend what they get by their knavery. Damn them for a pack of crafty rascals, and you who serve them for a parcel of hen-hearted numbskulls. They villify us, the scoundrels do, when there is only this difference. They rob the poor under the cover of the law, forsooth, and we plunder the rich under the protection of our own courage. Had you not better make one of us, than sneak after the arses of those villains for employment.

"You are a devilish conscious rascal, Damn ye! I am a free prince and have as much authority to make war on the whole world, as he who has a hundred sail of ships and an army of 100,000 men in the field. And this my conscience tells me;

but there is no arguing with such sniveling puppies who allow superiors to kick them about deck at pleasure, and pin their faith upon a pimp of a parson, a squab who neither practices or believes what he puts upon the chuckle-headed fools he preaches to."

Each pirate ship was an entity unto itself, a self-governing, self-contained stock company. Now that they all found common land base here at New Providence they almost automatically set up the basic elements of a piratical commonwealth. Ships were constantly setting out on cruises or coming in so that the number and personnel ashore fluctuated considerably. By general consent, the onshore regulation of their common interests rested in the hands of a council of whatever captains and quartermasters were ashore at the time. The pirates were definitely the aristocracy of this colony, then came the traders, the smugglers, and hangers-on. All this motley band lived well, if somewhat turbulently. They were free of any but self-imposed restraints, they had plenty to eat and more to drink, and they had as much social security as any of them had ever enjoyed before. They went a-plundering when they had spent their last penny and returned to enjoy the proceeds when they had taken another prize. New Providence became the focal point of West Indian piracy, and piracy as such reached unheard-of proportions, so much so that any merchantman sailing the Caribbean felt himself lucky if he returned with his shirt. And it had to be a pretty poor shirt if a pirate allowed him to retain that.

Jennings, the recognized leader of this piratical movement and its presiding genius, was wise enough never to set himself above any of his professional colleagues. He remained just one of the captains that came and went from this common land base. The roster of those who frequented New Providence at this time is the roster of piracy from 1716-1718.

For the most part the early years of these men remain unknown. There is little about the bringing up and childhood of even the most notorious. Biographies of their careers in piracy are frequently well recorded—too well recorded, in fact, for easy reading. There are whole dreary catalogues of ships taken, details of longitude and latitude, inventory of looted cargoes, and especially minute particulars relating to atrocious conduct, but very little about personal background.

This much, however, is abundantly clear, most pirates came from the lowest dregs of society, from the slums of seaport towns, illegitimate waifs who first served apprenticeship, voluntarily or impressed, as sailors, then privateersmen and eventually independent pirates. Many were transported felons, criminals, or other kind of undesirables before they climaxed their careers under their own black flag.

One exception was Major Stede Bonnet. He was a gentleman born and man of independent means, master of a plantation on the Barbados. For some reason known only to himself he deliberately sold all his possessions and became a pirate of his own free will and accord. His contemporaries considered—and with reason—that he was crazy. Piracy

was not a career, even in its heyday, that had attraction except to the desperate; as a life work piracy was always dangerous, usually unremunerative and uniformly brief. Bonnet furthermore had the distinction of being an uncommonly inefficient and unsuccessful pirate. He knew nothing of seafaring of any kind, had none of the abilities that would make him leader of anything. All he ever succeeded in doing was in conjunction with Edward Teach, alias Blackbeard, who really knew the business. This association more than anything else eventually hanged Major Stede Bonnet, Gent. His was not a prominent piratical career.

The early life of another pirate has been recorded and perhaps will serve as example for the formative years of many. His "father" had bought him as an infant from a gypsy and, since his father was by trade a Covent Garden porter, trained the child from tender years to co-operate with him in a singular sideline to his regular business. Covent Garden porters did then as they do today carry around market goods in big high-sided baskets which they bear on their heads. "Father" taught the child to ride in the basket, hidden from sight and borne high above the heads of fellow foot passengers. Whenever a likely looking wig was spotted, "father" maneuvered to within range, while "son" reached down and snatched the wig. There was a good market for secondhand wigs. Eventually, "father" was caught and promptly hanged; "son," because of his tender years, was transported to the Jamaican plantations, from which he eventually escaped and took to piracy.

Preschool advantages such as this, especially as there was

no school to follow save the forecastle or barracoon, quite understandably inclined the growing child toward piracy or worse, if it could be found.

There is not a great deal of documentary material on European low life dating from the start of the eighteenth century. Literature was closely confined to the upper levels of society; the slums were not considered "subject" in the polite circles of aristocracy where writing flourished. Hogarth in pictorial art and Defoe in letters have left about the only impression we can now gain of the wrong side of the tracks.

One thing is clear however regarding the early lives of pirates. Few were legitimate or had anything resembling a family background or bringing up behind them. At the time, especially among people of no property and therefore no inheritances to consider, illegitimacy was so usual it was hardly a matter of gossip. The eighteenth century is replete with examples of intricate matrimonial and biological dilemmas. Even in the best society of the time, husband and wife frequently led independent lives of astonishing variety. The double standard waved over the land. Gentlemen carried on multiple *ménages* as a matter of course—and talked very freely on the subject; ladies did likewise—and said nothing. From the Royal Highness himself on down through society these were the accepted mores. We consider now that horse racing was the sport of kings; in the eighteenth century they knew better.

But as though to make up for the deficiency in their formative years, pirates made their biographies most detailed as

regards their later lives. So much of their actions and behavior has been documented that it becomes clear what kind of personalities they possessed and reasonably logical why they behaved as they did.

Jennings himself, after all he had done to start and promote the pirate business, was the first to quit when pardon and amnesty was proffered to pirates. Perhaps he knew that the boom days were over; maybe he had put by enough to afford retirement to less exciting surroundings. Benjamin Hornigold was another who, after a prosperous piratical career, reformed and eventually became the pillar of the more legitimate government of the island.

This was not the case with Edward Teach, another New Providence alumnus. Blackbeard, as he was known, was most unregenerate and is perhaps today the best known of all the pirates of his time. Teach, who was a fellow Jamaican privateer with Jennings and Hornigold, began piracy with the Spanish Plate incident. After he had branched off with a ship of his own and was in business for himself, he exhibited traits of character that made him conspicuous even among pirates. A very important element in piracy was the matter of reputation. This they jealously guarded and did all in their power to foster and promote. It was good business. Ships accosted at sea, when they learned that the pirate was one of recognized ferocity, showed less resistance. In a word, a reputation for unbridled savagery was a pirate's best asset. Blackbeard went to great lengths to cultivate this and, being an excellent showman, put it over with the result that he

remains well-known two hundred years later. He cultivated a terrible set of whiskers, which he braided ingeniously enough into his hair, and moustaches a little bit like the early Gauls. The result was singularly repulsive. He was a tall, big, heavy-set man with a terrific bellowing voice. At night he often illuminated himself by placing lighted fuses in his whiskers and suddenly confronting trembling captives who might have a little cash sewn into their breeches. The technique usually scared them out of both cash and breeches. Piratical taste in refreshment normally ran to excessive quantity and high degree of alcohol. Teach impressed even his colleague by mixing gunpowder in his rum, setting it on fire and guzzling the explosive mixture.

Apart from his histrionics which were impressive enough, he was perhaps actually more brutal and bloodthirsty than any. But he was intelligent enough to sustain a long piratical career and, after he left New Providence and frequented the Carolina coast, effected a nice working arrangement with the regional governor so that he practiced his calling with every advantage even there.

If the governor of neighboring Virginia had not been so independent, Teach would have lived longer than he did. Readers of *Treasure Island* will remember the character Israel Hands. Blackbeard's gunner was the real Israel Hands and happened to be the only survivor of the battle in which Blackbeard lost his life—and incidentally his head, for colonial governments placed a bounty on piratical heads just as literally as they did on catamounts. Israel was not

present at the time of this terminal engagement, he was convalescing from a party. At a drinking bout a few days before, Blackbeard had discharged a pistol under the table, a habit he had when the party seemed to drag a little. Hands had his knee shattered by the pistol ball. Years later Israel Hands, a crippled beggar, was a familiar character in the London streets.

Blackbeard was a person of abounding vitality. He is credited with having fourteen wives, an all-time record even among sailors. His final, fourteenth and widow, was a Carolina girl of fourteen.

Lieutenant Robert Maynard, who finally killed Blackbeard, held a sort of informal autopsy afterward and discovered his antagonist had been shot no less than twenty-three times and well sliced and run through with cutlasses as well before he died.

John Martel, another old Jamaican privateer and New Providence citizen, ended his career marooned on the island of Santa Cruz.

James Fife was killed by his own men. Christopher Winter and Nicholas Brown both entered the Spanish service after piracy became too dangerous a calling. Paul Williams and Charles Bellamy were shipwrecked on Cape Cod and eventually hanged in Boston with appropriate ceremony. Thomas Burgess and Oliver la Bouche were lost at sea. Edward England graduated from the West Indies and enlarged his piratical career in the Indian Ocean. His exact fate is unclear, but he was reported to have moved ashore onto the island of Madagascar and gone native. Three other pirate

leaders who had made New Providence their refuge, Thomas Cocklyn, Richard Sample and Charles Vane were all hanged. John Rackam, alias "Calico Jack," formerly Vane's quartermaster and later pirate captain in his own right, was also eventually hanged.



CHAPTER FIVE

“Gone on the Account”

“GONE ON the account” in piratical slang signified gone a-pirating, as “finding their market” meant the taking of a prize, or “looking for merchandise consigned to them” meant cruising for prey. For like all professions or trades, legal and otherwise, piracy had a jargon, cant expressions of their own, and there was an added facetiousness in the way they plundered both the goods and the trade vernacular of honest merchantmen, simultaneously. In fact a wry sense of humor pervades the frequently brief, dramatic, and mis-spent lives of the great majority of pirates.

Piracy was at its peak and had developed a definite kind of quality, a business, as a business and a manner of living at the same time. There was a great variety of variations depending upon individual personalities and specific circumstances, but there was a general scheme to the practice of piracy during the brief span of its heyday.

The rapid rise culminating in the establishment of the Pirate Republic of New Providence took a form distinctively its own. While it owed much to the buccancers of the

preceding nautical generation, it owed more to the privateers of the war just terminated. This relationship, understood at the time prompted Cotton Mather's complaint that, "The Privateering Stroke so easily degenerates into the Piratical, and the Privateering Trade is usually carried on with an Unchristian Temper and proves an Inlet into much Debauchery and Iniquity."

A private warship was usually financed by merchants ashore who received so many shares in the vessel's future loot in return for their capital investment. The crew were paid by shares also, the captain receiving up to one hundred shares and graduating down to the lowest sailor who had one share. The "company" bought, fitted out, and armed the vessel; the dividends were returned to the stockholders proportionately. Big plunder, big dividends. No plunder, no dividends. It was all quite simple. In actual operation they placed reliance on large crews and small, fast sailing vessels. The privateer technique was surprise and boarding the prize, preferably without cannonade, which damaged what they hoped would be their future property.

In spite of the fact that pirates were fully outlawed and beyond all official discipline of any kind, they contrived their own laws for their own self-government. There was no, or at the most scant, co-operation between pirate ships. Each ship with its crew was an independent self-governing and profit-sharing entity. These lawless men no sooner defied established law than they made up statutes of their own. On the whole, pirates lived as obediently to their own rules as most people. The only trouble was that the

basic principles were antagonistic to conventional society.

"No prey, no pay" was the fundamental principle of piracy. Their ship was always stolen, so were all their other material possessions; they never bought anything they were able to steal.

They always drew up—and in writing which was a rare accomplishment for common sailors—very definite articles of agreement to which every member signed his name or made his mark. They endorsed this document in "Round Robin," that is, all the signatures were written around the periphery of a circle so that if taken no one individually appeared more responsible than anyone else.

One of these documents has come down intact and can be taken as a good example of the laws of the lawless.

"ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT

"1. Every man has a vote in affairs of moment, has equal title to the fresh provisions, or strong liquor, at any time seized and may use them at pleasure, unless a scarcity makes it necessary for the good of all to vote a retrenchment.

"2. Every man to be called fairly in turn by list on board of prizes because (over and above their proper share) they are allowed a shift of clothes. But if one defraud the company to the value of one dollar, in plate, jewels or money, the punishment is marooning. If robbery takes place between two crewmen the guilty one shall have his nose and ears slit and be set ashore not on some inhabited place but where he shall surely suffer hardship.

“3. No person shall game at cards or dice for money at sea.

“4. The lights and candles shall be put out at eight o'clock at night. If any remain still inclined for drinking they shall do so on the open deck.

“5. All shall keep their firelocks, pistols and cutlass clean and fit for service.

“6. No women allowed. If any man be found carrying one of the sex to sea, disguised, he is to suffer death.

“7. Desertion of the ship or quitting quarters in battle is punished by death or marooning.

“8. No striking another on board ship. Every man's quarrel shall be ended on shore, at sword and pistol, thus: The quartermaster, failing reconciliation, shall accompany both ashore with such assistance as he sees fit. The disputants are set back to back at twenty paces distance. At the command they turn and fire immediately (or else the pistol is knocked from their hand). If both miss, they come to their cutlasses.

“9. No man shall talk of breaking up their way of living until each has shared 1,000 pounds. If any man should lose a limb or become a cripple in the common service, he shall have 800 dollars out of the public stock, and for lesser hurts proportionally.

“10. The captain and quartermaster shall receive two shares in a prize. The sailing master, boatswain, and gunner, one share and one half. Other officers, one and one quarter. Sailors, one.”

In cases of doubt regarding the interpretation of this code of laws, a jury was chosen to bring a verdict. The punishment of offenses too small to warrant any action and not specified in the articles was left to the discretion of the quartermaster. Of all the officers on a pirate ship, the quartermaster was the most important. In the first place he was elected, like all the officers, by free vote of all the ship's company. He was the trustee for the ship's company as a whole, crew and officers alike, and, at the same time, claimed all authority except in time of actual chase or battle. He alone had authority to flog (according to Mosaic Law—forty lashes less one) anyone who was quarrelsome, mutinous, or who abused prisoners or plundered beyond orders. He had to be the first to board a captured prize. He set aside what was for the company's use and decided what should be taken and what left. (Gold and silver were, by common vote, non-returnable.) In short, the quartermaster was a kind of civil magistrate.

The captain, also elected to his office, was military leader only and selected for his knowledge of fighting, his courage, and luck. To be "pistol proof," as they expressed it, was also a desirable quality. His power was absolute in time of chase or battle; at other times he was just a member of the crew, although he was allowed the use of the cabin as a prerogative. A captain or any other officer could be deposed, failing a general vote of confidence.

The sailing master, boatswain, gunner and other subordinate officers were "artists," that is technicians, elected for their knowledge and specialized skills. The sailing master

was in charge of the navigation of the ship. The boatswain supervised the maintenance of the vessel and its supplies of naval stores, that is, cordage, tar, pitch and tallow, spare sails, etc. The gunner was in charge of the cannon, powder supplies, and the heavy armament. There were few variations, and these minor, on this general arrangement of a pirate crew.

The most important and vital item of piratical equipment was the ship. Since the pirates never designed or built their own, but depended upon capture, ordinary merchant vessels were adapted to piratical requirements. Speed was the most essential feature; cargo capacity the least necessary. The West Indian pirates of the beginning eighteenth century preferred thirty- to fifty-ton sloops. They were seldom out of sight of land and needed no more ocean-going vessels. Small size and shallow draft were of great advantage in and among the passages, reefs, and shoals that dotted the narrow seas of the Caribbean, both for the purpose of chasing down larger ocean-going merchantmen and escaping from warships sent out to capture them.

Also a small ship was easier to careen and clean than a big one, and this chore had to be repeated at least three times a year in the tropics—oftener if they wished the greatest speed from their vessel. But this was a large undertaking. The sloop was run close to shore at a selected, and secluded, spot where trees ashore provided purchase for their tackles. The ship was completely unloaded and the topmast taken down. Then blocks and tackles were hitched from mast to trees and the hull pulled over until almost on beams end,

flat on its side. Men in boats scraped the incrustation from half the below-water, daubed it with sulphur as deterrent to "worms," and then coated it with tallow. Also, of course, they attended to any calking or repairs that might be needed on the planking. Then the sloop was turned around and the process repeated on the other side. This took some time during which the crew encamped ashore in bivouac, for they were in a vulnerable position should they be surprised by a hostile ship. Oftentimes, because of haste or particular danger, they "boot-topped," which was a kind of partial careening. Anchored in still water, they shifted all the cargo, guns, spare anchors, etc., to one side and cleaned down as far as they could below normal waterline. But this was a make-shift measure.

About the only structural change pirates made on a merchant sloop of the period was to cut down all deck houses, if there were any, so that they had a flush deck and unencumbered. They also saw to it that the gunwales were raised higher than normal for peaceful purposes. For breast-high gunwales gave better protection as well as a hiding place for the crew during a chase. These sloops were broad of beam, by yachting standards of today, for they had originally been built for cargo; but their lines were good, and they sailed fast and were excellent sea boats.

Like most merchant ships in those troubled times, a pirate sloop carried anywhere from two to eight cannon of light weight. Although they did not rely on cannonade in their methods of assault, cannon were useful in case they themselves were attacked.

Pistol and cutlass were the standard weapons of pirates, on which they placed principal reliance. The pistols were the usual flintlock, brass or iron-barreled affairs of about .50 to .60 caliber. At twenty paces a one-ounce pistol ball could spell death as truthfully as any more recently contrived instrument of war. In reality these heavy weapons were as formidable as a shotgun loaded with a single ball, inaccurate over a long range but carrying a killing shock that would knock down an ox. The seaman's cutlass took its name from the medieval curtal axe, a short wide-bladed weapon more like a cleaver than either axe or sword. It had gradually evolved from this into a yard-long, wide-bladed sword, slightly curved like a saber but a good deal heavier. A rounded brass guard like that of a Scottish claymore protected the hand and wrist. It was a lethal weapon, for the swordplay it afforded was both cut and thrust, brute strength as well as skill. Each pirate had to provide his own cutlass and pistols and carried them all the time. The cutlass swung at the hip; the pistols were thrust in a sling of leather or ribbon across the chest.

Pirate tactics were quite uniform and governed by a good understanding of fellow wayfarers and their habits on these waters. The standard procedure was based on ambushade, surprise, chase, followed by "clapping aboard," or "entering their men" as it was often called—a hand-to-hand attack.

Ships coming from Europe were more desirable prizes naturally than outward-bound vessels. The incoming ships carried merchandise for the colonial markets. The pirates wanted that merchandise to sell themselves. The ship routes

were so well established there was little question where to go to look for a prize. Deep-sea navigation was so crude at this time that ships sailed from Europe due westerly from Cape Verde or the Canary Islands and could therefore be trusted to enter the West Indies through Windward or Mona Passage or one of the smaller passages in the Lesser Antilles. All a necessitous pirate had to do was to linger around one of these passages and look over the prospects.

Life lay at all times balanced in between extremes of frolic and of violence, but always in an atmosphere of sweating, fever-ridden heat, thirst, hurricane, with shipwreck or starvation from being cast up on some desert island as ever present realities. Things that might and could happen at any hour of the day or night and, by comparison, deaths that made the gunshot wound or gallows pleasanter alternatives. They knew all too well the ever-present malaria and yellow fever as well as all the ranges of apyrexias and fluxes that the climate afforded. Periodically these gorgeous idyllic seas were convulsed in hurricanes which confounded land, ship, and seas in wild witches' caldron of all tempests.

"God's in his tiddle to send so great a storm." Gun tackles rigged to the straining tiller would keep the ship riding the furious seas. Under bare poles they would tear blindly through the night, perhaps only to be lost in open ocean without water or provision to return, perhaps the next lift of the sea would crush the ship like an eggshell on reef or desolate island. They knew the "Garden of Eden" beauty of those little islands; they also knew the horror of the

maroon, the thirst that came before starvation. When they marooned a man they mercifully gave him a pistol and a single charge of ball. When nature marooned men there was no such happy dispatch allowed. Nature is so much more beautiful—and merciless—than Man.

Pirates of this time had strange adventures, not all resulting from their violent way of life. Once in open ocean and not far from land a pirate ship sighted a tall ship and gave it chase. Long before they came within hail it was clear to all that something was amiss. The sails were in disorder; the ship sailed for a little upon one tack then aimlessly came into the wind, was taken aback, then drifted off on the other tack, futilely zigzagging and circling on an easy sea. No hail answered them and there was no show of colors in response to their own black standard. Yet the decks were thronged with men scampering to and fro in the uttermost confusion.

They soon learned the answer though not from spoken words, for none knew the dialects of the Guinea coast of West Africa. This had been a Spanish slave ship, which had endured almost all the horrors of the middle passage. But just before reaching destination, the slaves had somehow broken their shackles and risen against their captors. Primitive vengeance ran its course and every Spaniard had been cut down and thrown overboard. But now what to do? The liberated blacks had never seen a ship before this involuntary excursion from their jungle homes. They had no idea where they were, or where bound. Not one of them had the faintest idea of how to manage the complex mechanism of sail

and cordage. In a few more days all would have died of starvation and thirst, drifting on the ocean.

Pirates, who were most of the time intensely practical people, rescued the Negroes and under a prize crew sailed the slaver and its cargo to port and sold both for a handsome profit.

Another time when a pirate ship had run down a slow-sailing London merchant ship they met with stiff resistance. For four hours the fight, no quarter asked and none granted, surged back and forth, first on one deck and then on the other. The merchant had "close quarters," movable bulwarks of heavy timbers on her deck, which acted as ramparts for her crew. Netting hung from the shrouds and impeded the boarding pirates. Cutlass and pistol were not enough for either side. Every weapon of hand-to-hand warfare came into play. Boarding axes, like heavy hatchets slashed and chopped. Boarding pikes fenced and stabbed with the clumsy skill of bayonets. Each showered the other's deck with hand grenades, improvised from case bottles filled with gunpowder and scrap iron. Stinkpots, of crockery filled with evil-smelling sulphur, blanketed the miasma of powder fumes. Repeatedly the "Murdering Pieces," long-barreled swivel guns with flaring muzzles, withered the decks with sharp gusts of small shot, old nails, broken glass, and miscellaneous hardware.

The furious and bloody battle came finally to the attacking pirates. For them there was never surrender. Wounded, singed, and powder-blackened, they examined their prize. The cargo was under hatches. No member of the crew

remained alive to tell them the lading under the hatches.

They had taken for all their work a transport vessel, London to Jamaica, loaded with Newgate felons under sentence of penal servitude! There was no market value in any such merchandise as this. They ran the prize ship and all its unwelcome cargo ashore on the north of Jamaica and turned the cargo of malefactors loose to bedevil the Governor of Jamaica and give him something to think about besides chasing pirates.

The following composite—that is to say, largely fictional—account of a typical piratical venture may give a better idea of the life than any more sober and statistical report. The management assumes no responsibility for its possible lack of melodrama and romance.

They had seen sails often, but on closer inspection they did not answer requirements. One was a tall ship, a London merchant, deep-laden in the water, and sailing heavily, but as they came within hailing distance they counted an ominous number of gun ports, rank upon rank, along her sides. They were not painted gun ports either, but the real thing, from which peered the round, bright-brass circle of a nine-pounder. The pirates saw the gun crews at their posts and the master gunner with a lighted linstock smoking in his hand. This was too great a countenance of force for twenty men with four-pounders as their heaviest guns. Furthermore, the ship was too well alerted. Out of spite the pirates slammed a round shot across her bows; in instant reply

two heavy shot howled close over the deck of the little sloop. Up went their helm and around they turned, tacking away beyond range. This was too high game for them to fly at.

They had no intention of fighting unless necessary. They sailed so fast they could pick and choose, attack or retreat, as they wished. They passed a Dutch sloop that looked like good merchandise, until they saw she was crowded with men. Dutchmen, as everyone knew, seldom mounted great guns which took up too much cargo space, but they did carry large crews. Also and more important, they were singularly tenacious of their property. A Dutch merchant skipper and his men would fight to the last drop of blood defending a cargo of salt herring.

The sailor on lookout at the crosstrees called down "Sail ho!" and pointed with an outstretched arm dead ahead. "A sloop, not greater than twenty ton, well-laden. A New Englander from her cut," he reported, after he regained the deck. This was just what was wanted and without necessity of orders all hands made preparation. It was morning, and at the rate they sailed they would be up with her by dark. They crowded on all sail to shorten the time before the encounter. All deck hamper was coiled or stowed below leaving the decks unencumbered. The four four-pounders were loaded, primed, and run out in preparation for the attack, if it were necessary. Every man looked to his weapons. The gunner and his mate laid out ready for hand a supply of muskets, grenades, stinkpots, and boarding pikes and axes. If they took this ship, the lookout who first spotted it

would have the choice of the best brace of pistols captured. This was the customary award.

In a few hours the victim was well in sight, sailing slowly but on the same tack. The chase was on even before the prey was aware of it. The quartermaster took the helm, the captain stood at his elbow and conned the ship so as to gain the weather gauge. Everyone else huddled below the level of the gunwales out of sight, nursing their weapons. To all external appearance the New Englander saw overtaking him only a sloop, apparently in ballast for it was high in the water and sailed fast. No one was on deck and nothing to arouse suspicion, just one of the inter-island small craft.

They were within hailing distance before ensign was shown or identity given as nautical courtesy required.

"*Prudent Hannah* of Boston, Israel Bemis, Master," shouted the New England skipper. "What ship?" at the same time the blood-red Union Jack broke, fluttering from the masthead.

"From the Sea!" roared the pirate captain. Simultaneously, the four-pounder on the forecastle head boomed and a round shot sprayed a geyser of water over the New Englander's bow. A jet-black flag, emblem of death and piracy, broke at the pirates' masthead. At the signal the crew sprang to their feet. Yelling like demons and brandishing their weapons, they crowded the gunwales. With a quick maneuver the pirate came down the wind and ran squarely alongside. Grapnels arched from the deck and, tangling in the victim's rigging, drew the two sloops close alongside.

Instantly, agile as cats, the pirates sprang into the other shrouds and gained the deck. Surprise was complete and resistance hopeless.

"Quarter!" bawled Captain Bemis, bringing his sloop into the wind so that both vessels, now joined together, idled with flapping sail. The skipper with his crew of three men and a boy, stood in the present fear of death, hopelessly outnumbered. Show of resistance could result in vain bloodshed. The *Prudent Hannah* was lost with all cargo, but the loss was an academic matter to Israel Bemis and his men. After all they were neither owners nor shareholders in the venture. All they had to lose was their own skins which they were anxious to preserve intact. The *Prudent Hannah* had been well named, the same virtue applied equally to the crew.

"Quarter it is," called the pirate leader. "Down your tools, boys. 'Tis fair prize—and easy does it."

After the brief tension of the chase and capture, the conclusion took on more the atmosphere of a social affair than the drama of armed robbery, *ad terrorem*. The pirates bore no animosity against their victims, since there had been no resistance and no occasion for reprisal. The captured crew had been fairly surprised and overpowered. To them it was a game, a professional hazard, which they had honestly lost.

Rummaging below decks, one of the pirates produced a punch bowl. Another came behind him bearing an armful of long-necked rum bottles, which he neatly decapitated with his pistol barrel, and dumped the contents into the bowl. Lemon, water, and sugar were added, stirred in with a tarry finger. Those who were of the habit produced pipe

and tobacco, while all, captor and captives alike, sat down on deck and passed the bowl around.

Sailors, in the days when sailing meant being incomunicado from the world for weeks and months at a time, had all the normal nose for news and gossip repressed. Chance meetings at sea, provided the weather permitted, always were the occasion for visiting and the exchange of news. Since Bemis and his men had struck colors in such accommodating fashion, there was no reason why the conventions should be overlooked.

Bemis informed his captors that the *Prudent Hannah* was freighted with casks of dried and salted codfish and barrel staves and hoops consigned to merchants in the Barbados. They had no more than the normal quantity of ship's store, cordage, spare sail, pitch and tallow on board. The owners were a niggardly lot and had provisioned them with less than a pint a day of rum, and that of the sorriest quality. No seaman, he went on to say, could put his heart in his work on such wretched belly timber as this here. But wretched as it might be to Israel Bemis' refined tastes, the rum punch had mellowing effect. As day faded into darkness, lanterns were brought within the circle around the punch bowl. News was replaced by anecdote, and anecdote gave way to song and jokes and laughter. The two sloops, lashed together with all sail doused but unfurled, floated rocking on the gentle swell. No one paid any attention to anything but the matter at hand, namely, the punch bowl which was replenished again and again until the party collapsed under sheer weight of alcohol.

The pirate quartermaster proposed they take both sloop and cargo to market at the back of Cuba. No sense in troubling to plunder the sloop here in open ocean. The others readily assented. After a night like the last night, work in any form appealed to the pirate crew as something unwholesome and clearly to be avoided.

Bemis, who had established himself as a good fellow, might as well be cut adrift in the *Hannah's* longboat and his crew with him. A day's sail would carry them comfortably to safety. The pirates had all the crew they wanted and so never asked if they would join. The longboat was well provisioned. Captain Bemis and his men were allowed to keep their clothes and personal effects and given a generous ration of rum, salt beef, and water, to see them on their way.

Coxen's Hole probably had another name to the Spanish and semi-Spanish settlers who lived there, but, with true Anglo-Saxon disregard for accuracy, the pirates knew it by no other. The scattered collection of dilapidated huts lay at the extremity of a bottle-shaped harbor, well-screened and hidden by dense tropical foliage. The high mountains which formed the spine of Cuba cut off all land communication from the more inhabited parts of the island. It was a perfect hideout. Furthermore a community well used to the acquisition and handling of stolen property.

The quartermaster attended to all matters of company business. It was he who arranged the details of the landing and subsequent auction ashore of the cargo of the *Prudent Hannah* and eventually of the sloop itself, which was an appreciable share of the gross profit of the venture. When the

time came that all had been either converted to cash or reserved for the general use of their ship, the quartermaster proclaimed payday and apportioned to each man his share of the booty, several hundred Spanish dollars apiece.

The pirate crew had worked and worked hard unloading cargo under the blazing sun and in the damp feverish atmosphere of land-locked Coxen's Hole. Now that the work was done, all hands prepared to relax and spend what they had earned. The inhabitants of Coxen's Hole were prepared for this contingency as well. For their risk in flouting the Spanish authorities in receiving a foreign vessel and contraband goods, they bought well below market values and then prepared to sell their entertainment at slightly above. Between Spanish and Spanish half-breed settler and English pirate there existed a well-defined mutual benefit agreement from which each extracted what he most wanted.



CHAPTER SIX

Belly Timber

"THERE CAN be no adventure without belly timber." Food and drink are both essential to life and activities, and are basic determining factors, directly or indirectly, in the motivation of all human conduct. Pirates, like everyone else, lived in large measure as their food and drink supply dictated. The adage might well be paraphrased, "as a man eateth, so is he." Also the converse is equally true, "as a man is, so does he eat." Man and his food have a kind of reciprocal relationship.

The green turtle of the West Indies, perhaps as much or even more than any other native factor, was responsible for the concentration of piratical activity in this part of the world. These great clumsy creatures were easy to catch, abundant, very nourishing, and, most important of all in the tropics before refrigeration, could be kept alive for weeks without any care save to prevent their escape.

The firstcomers to the West Indies developed, soon after their arrival in that exotic locality, a deep interest in the great marine turtles of the Caribbean. They discovered that

the aboriginal Indians of the island had long been familiar with the food value of these turtles and, furthermore, had invented a wholly novel method of catching them. The Indians had long before discovered the habits of the remora, the suckerfish, and turned his instinct to the benefit of their own account. The suckerfish is a smallish creature equipped by an ingenious nature with a doughnut-like sucker pad attached to the top of his head. The fish is too lazy to exert himself to hunt for food unaided. He simply attaches himself to the under part of a larger fish and, like the young man on a hearse, goes along for the ride. Whenever the larger host fish, shark or other creature, makes a meal there are sure to be crumbs left over for the remora, firmly fastened underneath. This early and natural kind of vacuum cleaner, furthermore, has such powerful suction he cannot be shaken or scraped off unless he wants to cast loose. The Indians, noticing this habit, made a point of catching the remora and making him do their fishing for them. Their habit was to catch the live fish, attach a long cord to the tail, and let him loose again in the water. The remora promptly went in search of a host to fasten onto. As soon as he had stuck himself firmly onto a turtle the Indian on the other end of the line hauled both of them in together. Columbus' sailors were much impressed by the ease and dispatch of this queer aboriginal kind of fishing.

There are a variety of turtles prevalent in the West Indian waters and most of them are of colossal size. The leatherback, which has no true shell but only a tough flexible carapace somewhat like the sole of a stout boot, is the largest, weigh-

ing often over a ton and measuring some six to eight feet long. Unfortunately for purposes of cuisine, this giant animal lives entirely on shellfish and his flesh is inedible. The hawksbill turtle, or the "tortoise-shell" turtle, is smaller—a mere matter of several hundred pounds. His shell is handsome but his meat is not very good to eat. The green turtle, on the other hand, and the only purely vegetarian turtle of the lot, had long earned for himself a prominent place on the menu. Green turtle soup, well laced with sherry, is an experience to the most jaded gourmet. In fact these turtles have all the qualities of the perfect human food. They are flavorsome, large, nutritious and not at all intelligent. This kind was the "eating" turtle of the West Indies, and such was their size, habits and prevalence that they were an important factor in the manners and customs of the islands.

Failing a handy remora to do the work, there were other ways of catching the great creatures, none of them very onerous. Being amphibians, the turtles were obliged to breathe at the surface at regular intervals and, consequently, never swam at any great depth. They were so big and slow-moving they could be easily harpooned. Three times a year these turtles became matrimonially inclined and, when they did, abandoned their customary caution. At night lady and gentlemen turtles would come ashore so the ladies might lay their eggs in the warm beach sands. It was only necessary to wait ashore at such times, catch the turtles out of their proper element, turn them over on their backs above the high-water mark, and there they would stay until further

notice. They are so clumsy that once set upon their backs they are unable to right themselves and get away.

They are readily caught in nets in which their flippers soon become hopelessly entangled. In fact, the present manner of turtle fishing in the West Indies is one of snaring. One of the stunts of boys in swimming along the Mexican coast is to catch turtles in the water barehanded. The boy, plunging in after a surfacing turtle, holds on to the back end of its carapace and by weighing it down prevents the creature from submerging again. Using his feet to steer the boy can maneuver the floundering turtle toward his boat where assistants hitch on a tackle and haul it out of water. There is an element of danger in this, for the turtles are large, are enormously powerful, and can bite like a blacksmith's bolt clippers.

The turtle eggs were also a good food, in spite of the fact that they looked like membranous golf balls since they were not equipped with hard shells. A clutch of turtle eggs usually contained forty or fifty eggs all together. Like seals the sea turtles had the habit of revisiting the same place when the urge came over them and were therefore predictable and dependable.

But the greatest attribute of these turtles from the dietary standpoint, especially the bill of fare of sailors, was that they were singularly tenacious of life. There was absolutely no means then known of preserving food from spoilage in the hot climate except salting which was not always positive in results. But turtles could be kept alive for weeks on board a ship with no attention whatsoever except seeing that they

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remained on their backs. Whenever fresh meat was wanted all the West Indian sailor had to do was go down in the hold and butcher a turtle.

Perhaps more than any other one article of diet the green sea turtle made the West Indies a happier place for mankind.

Most people are highly conservative in their attitude toward diet. They prefer to eat what, and only what, they have always been accustomed to eat. Any changes in bill of fare are usually the result of direst necessity and not entered into in the spirit of gastronomical adventure. The first Europeans entering the West Indies were no exceptions.

They discovered the natives were well fed and had abundance of food available, but it was not the kind they were used to. Pre-Columbian Europeans lived almost exclusively on meats, indulging sparingly in a few root vegetables and fruits. Turnips and cabbage were almost the only widely cultivated vegetables in Europe prior to the discovery of the New World. In the West Indies they found the dictary scheme of things reversed. Here the people lived principally on a variety of exotic kinds of vegetables and fruit, eating meats in the form of turtle, lizards and fish sparingly. The Europeans found they could readily go for the turtles and the fish but passed on the subject of lizards, especially the giant iguana, possibly the least promising in appearance of all God's creatures.

Europeans were used to great quantities of beef and pork, neither of which they found indigenous in the Caribbean. Just as soon as they could they imported both cattle and

hogs and stocked the islands. These animals so long domesticated in Europe were turned loose and soon reverted to their wild condition in their new surroundings, which provided them well with abundant forage. Wild cattle and hogs increased, multiplied and prospered in a very few years all over the West Indian islands, until whenever meat was needed hunters set out and shot their formerly domesticated stock. Such a reversal, from stock raising to hunting the same beast allowed to run wild, took place in the earliest settlements of the American Middle West, especially in the more southerly areas such as Arkansas, where even today the wild razorback hog is a prominent feature of the landscape. But there was this difference, in the West Indies no predatory enemy like wolves, catamounts or bears hindered or kept down the hog's natural and rather enthusiastic rate of reproduction.

Europeans did not take naturally to the vegetables in use by the natives. When they had to, they did, but only from strict motives of hunger. They regarded such exotic fare as potatoes and the ever-present manioc with suspicion, which was justified in the sense that imperfect preparation, especially of manioc, can readily lead to digestive disaster. Fruits and what they came to refer to as "salading" were already understood to have an antiscorbutic value and, as such, were used to counteract the ever-present scurvy from which so many generations of European sailors had suffered. But they had no natural fondness for such things. They discovered very early that an excess of fruits increased the natural chances of dysentery, the bane of all tropical existence.

Europeans pretty well restricted themselves to fruit and salading, in the form of punches for the one and salmagundi for the other.

Punch, the most universally popular of beverages at this time, is, theoretically at least, composed of five basic ingredients. In fact, five is the basic meaning of the word. Some kind of spirit or wine was the active alcoholic principal to which was added either water, tea or milk, then lime juice (a potent antiscorbutic) sweetened with sugar and flavored with spice. The number and variety of punches is infinite, depending upon the exact nature of the ingredients. One horrendous brew is reported in which the inventor compounded five different kinds of distilled spirits. The fate of this daring improviser is unknown but may perhaps be guessed. Such concoctions were mixed in a bowl, either hot or cold as desired, and drunk from a ladle or dipper by the assembled revelers.

A salmagundi was perhaps the ancestor of the salad as we understand the term today, although in the eighteenth century there were more prominent traces of its Italian origin. Uncooked herbs of all kinds and varieties, palm hearts in the West Indies especially, were chopped up in a bowl, to which were added, oil, garlic, chopped meats, eggs and flavoring, and all stirred together and served. There was such great variety in the composition of this oleaginous mess that the term "salmagundi" takes on the generic meaning for confusion, like its culinary cousin "hash."

No self-respecting European or colonial pioneer of this

period ever drank water if it could be avoided. Considering the prevalence of cholera, typhoid, and kindred complaints, it was probably a sound idea—in any event, a perennially popular conception. Beer was the steady beverage of the English, and also much more popular in France and Spain than it is today. Beer is not difficult to make and has a wide variety of forms, usually rated in terms of its relative alcoholic horsepower. Small beer, so frequently and slightly referred to at this time as “belly vengeance” was weak beer, like the onetime prevalent “near beer.” Sometimes it was made intentionally weak, more frequently its weakness was the result of dishonest brewing. The term itself came to be synonymous with anything of a piddling, inconsequential nature. There was even a more contemptible variety in the “chowder beer,” known in the American colonies and in Newfoundland, and not unlike “root beer” in its ostentatious innocence. This decoction was brewed from black spruce twigs, steeped in water and mixed with molasses. Only an imagination accustomed to all manner of gastronomical horrors can conjure up what it tasted like. There is no documentation in the records.

The subject of piratical refreshment, shared by all other West Indians at this time, would not be complete without mention of the “Bumboo.” This was a readily compounded mixture of rum, water, and sugar, flavored with nutmeg. Because of the common nature of its ingredients, the speed of making it, and its undeniable results, bumboo was the common beverage of sailors. The derivation of the rather

singular name is unknown, but there are evidences that it came from the African coast and was an importation of the slavers.

Eggs, broken and mixed raw with beer, gin and sherry, and the whole, flavored with cinnamon and nutmeg sweetened with sugar and served hot, resulted in "rumfustian." Further results, especially when the sun was over the yard-arm and the thermometer stood at one hundred and twenty, can be readily imagined. Rumfustian earned its singular name apparently for the fact that rum was not an ingredient, in much the same cryptic way that "May Week" in the English universities is so named because it happens in June.

Pirates at sea ate only two meals a day, which was the general practice among all sailors of the eighteenth century. Midmorning and midafternoon repasts were quite alike and bore none of that specialized character that now distinguishes the breakfast, luncheon, and dinner bills of fare. Unless the ship happened to be so large that the full-time services of a cook were required, each man fended for himself, or rather, pairs fended for themselves, messmates, as the term implies. A low-sided box of sand was fastened to the deck at the foot of the mast in which, when the weather permitted, a cook fire was kindled. Meat of all or any kind, fresh or salted, was stewed in an iron pot until ready to drop apart and then dished out into wooden pannikins or kits and eaten with the fingers. If the situation demanded utensils, there was always the hip knife all sailors carried.

All foodstuffs were in the common stock under charge of the quartermaster. There was no stint to the amount eaten

as long as there was enough for all. Drinks were concocted and served out at almost all times, especially at night. There was no limit per person to consumption of this, either, as long as the ship's supply lasted.

Fresh water was carried in casks belowdeck for emergency drinking and cooking. As no one washed, unless caught in a rain squall, no great amount of water was necessary. It was often observed of sailors that after the first few weeks at sea they acquired a dark glazed sort of patina. Sun tan, plus salt spray and general accretion rendered them a rich mahogany color.

People of the lower walks of life in the eighteenth century, as these pirates were, had a curious, almost incongruous sense of personal modesty. It is an attribute shared by most primitive folk. No matter how depraved their conduct might be, exposure of the person under any circumstances was a recognized and rigidly observed taboo.

The sanitary arrangements on small ships, such as pirates used, were not basically different from that generally in vogue on all vessels, great and small, merchant ships or units of the navy. The "Head" is still a common nautical term, although now not necessarily located at the head end of the ship, and certainly greatly improved over the eighteenth-century prototype. Originally the "Head" meant the head end or bow of the vessel, the knighthead, the braces and supports for the bowsprit at the extreme forward part of the ship. The location was as secluded as any part of a closely packed vessel could be. It was below the level of the breast-high bulwarks that hemmed the deck and well out of sight.

On men-o'-war a crude seat was ordinarily rigged, one on the port side for the common seamen, one on the starboard for the ship's officers. Small craft dispensed with such refinements and all hands did the best they could, perched on the forechains of the bow. The repeated plunging and pitching of the ship kept all washed clean, or clean enough.

The sloops must have been uncomfortable and were much too small for the excessive number of men a pirate ship habitually carried. In fact it remains a wonder how such small vessels could ever sleep the number of men they did. There would never have been room enough for a sufficient number of bunks or even hammocks. They must have sprawled on deck anywhere they could find room to lie down.

After a pirate ship had been out on the cruise away from New Providence for sometime, provided they had enough on board to eat and drink, they frequently stopped at one or another deserted and secluded island or mainland cove and went ashore for a few days' refreshment. On shore spare sails became improvised tents; there was wood for their fires and water for their cooking.

Piracy was grim, uncomfortable work even under the best of conditions. Yet it was not always grim all the time. Even pirates had opportunity to enjoy life now and then and, when they did, showed a sense of humor, no more crude and clumsy than the most that passed for wit among the far from subtle eighteenth-century English peasantry. With enough food and drink and no urgent need of working too

hard, the warm and balmy beaches were relaxation and entertainment enough. Their native self-reliance found expression in their entertainment in these gypsy camps, just as it did in more vital matters. If there was no one to amuse them they could amuse themselves. Curiously enough there exists a verbatim account of a mock trial, a form of amateur theatrical to which pirates were particularly partial. Presumably, so many of them had had such intimate experience with the due process of law in their variegated pasts that they relished the clumsy satire all the more.

“The Court and Criminal being both appointed as also Council to plead, the Judge got up in a Tree and had a dirty Tarpaulin hung over his Shoulders; this was done by Way of Robe, with a Thrum Cap on his head and a pair of Spectacles upon his Nose. Thus equipped he settled himself in his Place, and Abundance of Officers attending him below, with Crowbars, Handspikes, etc., instead of Wands and Tip-staves and such like.

“The Criminals were brought out, making a thousand sour Faces; and one who acted as Attorney General opened the Charge against them; their Speeches were very laconic and their whole Proceedings concise.

“ATTOR. GEN.: An’t please your Lordship, and you Gentlemen of the Jury, here is a Fellow before you that is a sad Dog, a sad, sad Dog; and I humbly hope your Lordship will order him to be hang’d out of the Way immediately.

“He has committed PyracY upon the High Seas, and we shall prove, an’t please your Lordship, that this Fellow, this

sad Dog before you, has escaped a thousand storms, nay, has got safe ashore when the Ship has been cast away, which is a certain Sign he was not born to be drown'd; yet not having the Fear of Hanging before his Eyes; he went on robbing and ravishing, Man, Woman and Child, plundering ships' Cargoes fore and aft, burning and sinking Ship, Bark and Boat, as if the Devil had been in him. But this is not all, my Lord, he had committed worse Villanies than all these, for we shall prove that he has been guilty of drinking small Beer and your Lordship knows there never was a sober Fellow but was a Rogue.

"My Lord, I should have spoke much finer than I have now but as your Lordship knows our Rum is all out, and how should a Man speak good Law that has not drunk a Dram!

"However, I hope your Lordship will order the Fellow to be hang'd.

"JUDGE: Harkce me, Sirrah! You lousy pittiful, ill-look'd Dog; what have you to say that you should not be tucked up immediately and set a sun-drying like a Scare crow? Are you guilty, or not guilty?

"PRIS.: Not guilty, an't please your Worship.

"JUDGE: Not guilty! Say so again, Sirrah, and I'll have you hang'd without any Tryal.

"PRIS.: An't please your Worship's Honour, my Lord, I am as honest a poor Fellow as ever went between Stem and Stern of a Ship, and can hand, reef, steer and clap two Ends of a Rope together as well as e'er a He that ever crossed salt Water; but I was taken by one GEORGE BRADLEY (the name of him that sat as Judge) a notorious Pyrate, a sad Rogue

as ever was unhang'd and he forc'd me, an't please your Honour.

"JUDGE: Answer me, Sirrah. How will you be try'd?

"PRIS.: By God and my Country.

"JUDGE: The Devil you will. Why then Gentlemen of the Jury, I think we have nothing to do but proceed to Judgement.

"ATTOR. GEN.: Right, my Lord; for if the Fellow should be suffered to speak, he may clear himself, and that's an affront to the Court

"PRIS.: My Lord, I hope your Lordship will consider—

"JUDGE: Consider! How dare you talk of considering? Sirrah, Sirrah, I never considered in all my Life! I'll make it Treason to consider.

"PRIS.: But, I hope your Lordship will hear some Reason.

"JUDGE: D'ye hear how the Scoundrel prates? What have we to do with Reason? I'd have you know, Raskal, we don't sit here to hear Reason—we go according to Law. Is dinner ready?

"ATTOR. GEN.: Yes, my Lord.

"JUDGE: Then Hark'ee, you Raskal at the Bar. Hear me, Sirrah hear me. You must suffer for three Reasons. First, because it is not fit that I should sit here as Judge and Nobody be hang'd. Secondly, you must be hang'd because you have a damned hanging look. And thirdly, you must be hang'd because I am hungry; for know, Sirrah that 'tis a Custom that whenever the Judge's Dinner is ready before the Tryal is over, the Prisoner is to be hang'd, of Course.

"There's the Law for you, ye Dog. So take him away, Gaoler."

Music played an important part in piratical life just as it did as long as sailors used sail. There were "work songs," chanties, in general vogue among all seafaring men, and the few which have come down to us are just as ribald as are the ballads popular among mariners today. Fiddles, hautboys, and recorders went to sea with pirates and provided what instrumental music they enjoyed. They were fond of dances of an impromptu character like the hornpipes, jigs and folk dances of England.

Feasting and drinking on a Gargantuan scale was the basic joy of piratical living and the regular feature of these island picnics. They took their pleasures relatively simple in these tropical and pastoral surroundings, and, very much in the Nordic tradition, frequently interspersed with drunken brawls and duels.

Once, at least, theatricals conducted on an elaborate and extensive scale caused difficulties. One pirate had been a strolling play actor in his youth in England. He forsook that life in order to extend his education by being a waiter at Oxford. For post-graduate experience, he later stole a horse and pistols and became a highwayman. The high Toby repaid his efforts, eventually, by leading him via Newgate to the life of a transported felon to the Jamaica plantations. From there he had taken off into piracy, but his early love of the stage had never deserted him. He wrote and produced a play, "The Royal Pyrate," for the benefit of his

shipmates, which was in verse with all the neo-classical conventions of the day observed.

The stage was the ship's quarterdeck. The action had climaxed at a point where Alexander the Great, surrounded by his guards, was examining a pirate brought before him for judgment. The ship's gunner, who had no interest in the theater and was thoroughly intoxicated anyway, poked his head out of the after cabin just in time to catch the lines:

"Know'st thou that Death attends thy mighty crimes
And thou shall'st hang tomorrow Morn betimes"

"By God," swore the astonished Gunner, "let him try that!" and bolted back to the cabin where his three pot companions were maundering over the punch bowl.

"They're a-going to hang honest Jack Spinckes," announced the excited Gunner. "If we suffer that we'll all hang. By God and they shan't hang honest Jack. We'll clear the decks of 'em."

With that he opened the arms chest and they all rushed on deck. The gunner lit a grenade and pitched it into the crowd of actors, effectually terminating the act in a deafening explosion. Several were badly injured before the gunner and his mates could be secured and the illusion of the theater explained to their satisfaction. "The Royal Pyrate," was never produced again. The poor stroller lay dead in the ruins of his last role.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Vulgar Errors

LIKE ALL frontiersmen of whatever time or place, the pirates land-based on New Providence have fallen victim to incorrigible romanticism, that occupational disorder of all adventurers and pioneers. In the contemporary phrase, pirates have always become surrounded by a sort of fog of "vulgar errors," popular misconceptions about their habits, manners, and customs.

Little limit had been placed on the exaggeration of their insensate cruelty; credulity has boggled at nothing with regard to their vast treasures and their tempting manner of leaving it around for subsequent discovery.

The few who wrote and chronicled anything at all about pirates and were contemporaries unite in such unqualified damnation of them that their appraisal lacks by its very vehemence the quality of conviction. It is like the famous lady who protests too much. The emphasis is so overloaded in the one direction that the student of the matter is constrained to think there must be something at least unsaid upon the other.

Malefactors, no matter whether they are pirates of two centuries ago or gangsters of this day of grace, can in the nature of human society find no impartial contemporary critic. *Advocatus diaboli*, even though a simple pleader for fairness, has a mean and dangerous role; the advocate of the devil can easily have his own identity confused with his client's and suffer a similar damnation. This was especially true of pirates and the opinion their literate contemporaries held them in. Pirates and all to do with them were devils of the deepest dye; they had, could have, no redemption, at least as far as expression in the permanent medium of printer's ink. For the conventions of the writer's art have always imposed a kind of censorship whereby the evildoer must be completely bad, and all the way through. The public must be forever reminded that crime does not pay, although there are sometimes implications that it might be pretty good fun. It is often pointed out that only the wages of sin are exempt from Income Tax.

In their own time there were two principal sources of moral appraisal on the conduct of pirates, ministers of the gospel and sea captains, neither of which were able to sustain a convincing reputation for telling the truth.

The Puritan clergy of eighteenth-century New England, who were the most eloquent of them all in the damnation of pirates and piracy, appeared to have a vested interest in Sin. The more spectacular the misdemeanor, the better scope it gave their undoubted qualities of showmanship. And there was nothing that their godly congregations liked better for their weekly intellectual fare than a

good rousing castigation of those less godly than they were.

The execution of pirates was signal for all the brethren of the cloth to rally around and to take turns praying over the condemned upon the scaffold. They rejoiced in the opportunity afforded to portray the insipid bliss of the heaven that they and their congregations were headed for, in contrast to the lurid conditions the subject of the occasion would be among in another hour. Two or three solid hours of prayer and preachment were needed to conduct a really first-class and edifying hanging.

One pirate endured all this on the scaffold, while the minister droned on and on about the heavenly bliss the pirate was certain never to experience. Finally losing patience he politely asked,

“Will you be pleased to turn me off forthwith. I am now convinced that Hell will be a merrier place.”

Sea captains for their part were just as violent on the subject of pirates, especially if they had experienced capture by them. If they had lost ship and cargo, they represented the disaster, one may be sure, in such terms that no atrocity, depravity, or example of wickedness had been omitted. The more they blackened the author of their ruin, the more rebounded to their own reputation and the better became their chance of finding another command. The propensity of all seafaring men toward taproom society and high-tension refreshment only accentuated what would have suffered exaggeration anyway. From this odd source came most of the grist for the ministerial mills, which lost nothing in the processing. Yet sea captains of the eighteenth century

bore a very direct responsibility for the conditions they so bitterly inveighed against. They were a brutal lot, governing their ship and the sailors under them in more inhuman fashion than even that callous age could tolerate ashore. At sea the captain was sole and absolute despot, with the life, torture, or death of his men wholly in the hollow of his horny hand. Men to sail the ships were plentiful, cheap, expendable. The captain was accountable to no one for anything as regarded his subordinates. Sailors were overworked, ill-paid, and fed food a self-respecting hog would not consider seriously. The forecastles where they slept when not at work were veritable black holes of a maritime Calcutta, wet, rat-ridden, blanketless, moldy bins cram-packed with infested, unwashed humanity. At the first whisper of complaint or grumble, the culprit could be triced to the gears while the boatswain flayed him insensible with the terrible cat-o'-nine-tails. There was keelhauling, too, from which few sailors ever recovered. Commands were habitually punctuated with a blow or a cut from a rope's end. If a sailor once struck back in anger, he was instantly shot and thrown overboard. Discipline must be maintained. Most sea captains, then and for generations afterward, were too stupid to ever understand that mercy had practical application. No wonder so many sailors mutinied, or refused to defend their ship against pirates, especially when pirates who had been through this kind of life themselves, usually sat in judgment on the captured skipper and dosed him with his own medicine.

One telling bit of evidence has come down that points

the matter. A few minutes before his execution a condemned pirate made this odd declaration from the gallows,

"I do wish that Masters of vessels would not use their men with such severity, as many of them do, for it exposes us to great temptations."

Perhaps it is easier to judge them now in the retrospect of two hundred years, although it does require understanding of an alien time and conditions, manners, customs, superstitions and prejudices that are now wholly strange. They were brawling, brutal, bloody times. The times of the Beer Street and Gin Alley of Hogarth's drawings. The times of Moll Flanders and the parts of Robinson Crusoe that are now expurgated. Life among the lower classes and on the frontiers, whether at sea or ashore, was dangerous, uncomfortable and usually short. Appetites were huge for gluttony, drink, and bloodshed, though lust appears to have played a singularly minor part.

No blood-chilling atrocity has ever been so stoutly maintained for so long as a distinctive feature of piracy as "walking the plank." The procedure, according to this attractive legend, was to blindfold the victim, usually a member of a captured crew, and tie his hands behind him. Then he was stood upon a plank cocked over the gunwale and told to step out. The pirate crew, gathered to enjoy the diversion from their workaday life, either let the victim fall off or shot him en route to his watery grave. In either event the results were fatal to the victim.

Unfortunately for the piratical tradition there is no evi-

dence that "walking the plank" was ever indulged in among pirates or anybody else. They might have gone to such extremity of cruelty, but the fact remains that I, at least, have never discovered any definite or conclusive instance of its ever having happened.

The dead, by whatever means, were conventionally thrown overboard for obvious reasons. Sometimes the living were too, but this was rare and under extreme provocation and was never the result of piratical *joie de vivre* or misdirected sense of humor. In this connection it is well to remember that slave ships of one hundred years ago, manned by citizens of this republic, conventionally threw their living cargo overboard when pursued by revenue cutters.

But again and again in literally hundreds of documented instances, the pirates of this period at least (and this is the only period of piracy under consideration) did not kill or even injure their captives, provided these same captives had proved amenable and had not put up too stiff a resistance. Pirates were usually more severe in their treatment of captured officers than of their crews. They usually punished captured captains and other officers who had shown themselves brutal to their own crews, letting them off, however, with no worse than a flogging.

Inasmuch as they conformed to any established practice, pirates usually tried to talk their prisoners into joining with them, offering equal rights. Failing this, they returned the looted ship and sent the crew on their way. Occasionally they "forced" a reluctant prisoner to serve them in one or another specialized capacity. Ordinarily, too, pirates did not

scuttle or burn ships just for the fun of it. If they wanted the ship for their own use, they took it; if they didn't, they let it go. The mere fact that there are so many tales about pirates is pretty good evidence that they did not follow the practice of "Dead men tell no tales," generally ascribed to them.

Only one atrocious practice, marooning, seems to be really characteristic of piracy. The origin of this peculiar and distinctive term is interesting. It traveled far from its first meaning, the way a great many words in common use do.

The Spaniards had depopulated the native labor supply so efficiently there could be nothing from that source—poor in quality though it was. The Spanish Government, which controlled all the rest of the Caribbean area, had imposed and maintained a monopoly on the African slave trade. The former Spanish proprietors of Jamaica so recently expelled by the English had had Negro slaves, but in the reshuffling of masters these had prudently taken to the woods. Freed from Spanish servitude and not yet under English, the Negroes, first generation for the most part from their African homes, fled into the jungle-covered mountains and re-established life much as they had lived it in Africa. These were the Cimaroons, a term the English abbreviated to Maroons, "dwellers in the mountains" and therefore fugitives, or lost people. The word became incorporated in the West Indian vernacular until it came to be the verb for piratical punishment, the deliberate abandonment of an expendable person upon a desert island.

The Maroons who had reconstructed tribal life in the Jamaica wilderness were a source of continual trouble and irritation. They were much more at home in such surroundings than the English who tried to recapture them. The blacks had already had a taste of bondage and did not like the theory or the practice. From time to time they became offensively aggressive and would burn and loot outlying plantation houses, vanishing again into the trackless forests and jungles of the mountains.

A similar situation happened in the Dutch possessions of Surinam on the northern coast of South America not long afterward and became a definite factor in the Dutch colonial development. The Djuka or "Bush Negroes" of Dutch Guiana began as a few runaway slaves who found refuge in the jungles. More and more joined with them until before long they formed a formidable body, a tribe of Africans as though they had immigrated as such to South America. The greater size of Surinam bequeathed the Dutch poorer luck in recapturing their quondam bondsmen. Also the once masters discovered the mistake they had made in recruiting slaves from the Ashanti, a tribe more intelligent, aggressive, and therefore less tractable than any other. Before long these Bush Negroes grown to powerful numbers reversed the original role. They, not the Dutch, were masters of the inland jungles; there the color line was inverted, and the black man became dominant and supreme. Their raids against the Dutch became more and more devastating as their numbers and organization grew until at last the European colonists were only too happy to pay annual tribute

as a price of peace. To this day the Dutch in Surinam pay, and expect to keep right on paying, tribute in cloth and arms to these descendants of slaves. No European is tolerated in this Negro jungle kingdom without the full consent of the Djukas and, when admitted, must tread softly and mind his manners. Scientists now claim that the original Ashanti civilization which has vanished from Africa is still kept very much alive, and with only a few innovations, in these South American jungles and by their transported tribesmen.

Such a black dominion could not last very long in the more restricted area of inland Jamaica. The English had a lot of trouble recapturing or subduing these Maroons but finally managed to do so.

"Marooning," as the pirates came to use the word, eventually came to mean the form of punishment usually meted out to backsliders from their own numbers. It was a hideously calculated fate. There were all kinds of variations practiced, but the usual method consisted in setting the victim ashore on one or another of those innumerable little sandspits or desert islands in the West Indies, where neither food nor water is obtainable, and where the land is often submerged at high tide. Here he was left alone with a bottle of water, a sea biscuit, a pistol and a single charge of powder and ball. Often the victim was stripped stark-naked, compounding the shame of his condition with the fiery heat of the tropical sun. Then his fellows sailed away upon their business.

There is one mention, a forceful one, of what happened

to a man thus marooned, probably the fate of all thus punished. A ship's boat landed on one of these sandspit islands and found they were not the first. There on the sands lay a bleached skeleton with a shattered skull, and beside it an empty bottle and an equally empty and rusted pistol.

Pirates and buried treasure are ideas as fixed in their association as the more prosaic union of ham and eggs. One almost automatically connotes the other in the ordinary train of thought. Ham and eggs have undeniable right in their close association. The association of piracy and hidden wealth has no such obvious origin as this. In fact, the root of the combination is found in a mental condition unsubstantiated by tangible proof. Buried treasure is one of those things that people want to believe in because they want to find it. Pirates, like all other people whose source of revenue is unusual, must have been incredibly rich. People spectacular in the public eye are always rich; ball players, movie actors and actresses, gold miners, successful authors, gangsters, and bank presidents are all wealthy. Pirates, who were denied by their profession banking or investment facilities of any kind, must have buried their ill-gotten plunder. This is an idea of undoubted attraction. The only restraining afterthought is that there is almost no evidence that it was true.

To begin with, in the available records about pirates which are documented and reliable, there is no mention of their burying treasure. It is true such records are regrettably scanty, but just the same it would seem incredible that any

such dramatic element as this would have been overlooked had it really existed. As though to make up for this deficiency, fictional accounts of piracy, which is a great body of imaginary literature, are freighted to the Plimsoll line with chests of jewels of incalculable value, ingot of dull gold, and all the silver of Potosí, all buried under white coral sands, the burier long since dead, the location obscure or lost, just waiting for the lucky finder.

The need for intense secrecy would explain the discrepancy of the records to complete satisfaction, if it were not for a few other factors which are not so readily explained away. Buried treasures of pirate gold necessitate, in the first place, a wealthy and successful pirate and, in the next place, a pirate of thrifty and provident habits. Unfortunately for the health of the attractive legend, few individual pirates ever accumulated a private fortune that was unaccounted for, and pirates generally were notoriously spendthrift and improvident.

Another thing not usually appreciated is the organization of a pirate crew. Following the general conception of a sea captain, the captain of a pirate ship is usually assumed to be an absolute despot, ruling his underlings with a rod of iron and taking to himself the lion's share. In actuality, as has been mentioned, pirates elected their captain by free suffrage and for the duration of his vote of confidence. Any time the majority of his crew lost confidence in his ability, the captain lost his position and went back to the forecandle again. His powers were strictly curtailed and very limited. In return for his services the captain was rewarded with at

most two shares as against the common sailor's one. A capture, even a relatively wealthy one, after it was split a dozen or fifty ways did not mean the captain, or any single individual pirate for that matter, received any great lump sum at one time. Pirates, like all other outcasts and fugitives from society, indulged themselves without stint or worry. Having no social security at all and knowing it, they behaved accordingly, making the most of the opportunities of the moment. When they had spent all their money, and not until, they went back a-pirating for more. There is no reason to believe that more than one or two pirates ever acquired great wealth, and then with positive proof that they spent it almost instantly. Most pirates managed on a subsistence level, barely making a living. Most of their revenue came from selling stolen goods, which like all goods thus acquired had to go at much less than market value.

In brief the sober evidence is strong that pirates, individually, were never in a position to amass large fortunes and were not temperamentally inspired to set aside for a rainy day anyway.

But it is easy to understand why the legend sprang up and flourishes so green in spite of no one's ever actually finding buried pirate treasure. There is a similar manifestation with regard to gold mines and gold miners, which is as popular today as it was when actual gold had a purchasing power.

One of the mysteries of all time is why the buried-treasure legend is so firmly attached to the memory of William Kidd, captain of the *Adventure* galley. Captain Kidd's treasure is supposed to have been buried—and found—at vari-

ous points along the Atlantic seaboard from Hatteras to Deer Isle, Maine. In fact, Captain Kidd had become the archetype of all that a pirate is supposed to have been, in direct defiance of all the known facts of his career which, as it so happens, are very well known and documented.

The worst that can be said for Captain Kidd is that he was a privateer and an uncommonly unsuccessful one at the business. To this misfortune was added a great deal of adverse publicity as central figure of a political *cause célèbre*, which finally encompassed his destruction. The most salient fact in his unhappy career, and the one most frequently forgotten, is that Kidd was executed for a justified homicide. He was tried for piracy, but the charge could not be proved, so he was eventually executed for the death of a mutinous seaman, who died as a result of Kidd having hit him on the head with a bucket. Considering the circumstances and the times, it is remarkable that so severe a sentence should have been passed on an act that even today would have been considered within the bounds of a captain's authority. Probably no trial for piracy ever attracted quite so much publicity as William Kidd's. There was a savor of flyblown politics in high places permeating his trial, and it was this that brought him to Execution Dock. The balladmongers of the London streets, who served the role of today's tabloids as purveyors of sensational news for the masses, helped immeasurably. He was hanged, as a contemporary expressed it, "by a doggerel ballad sung to a villainous tune."

There was no evidence that he had ever acted out of his commission as a privateer, that he ever acquired greater

wealth than the normal share of a sea captain, and, even if he had, that he ever had opportunity to bury it anywhere. Perhaps no man ever acquired a worse reputation on less grounds than William Kidd, mariner, of New York.

The full and true account of Captain Kidd has yet to be told in its entirety. It is a long and complex story and is concerned almost exclusively with piracy in the Indian Ocean, Red Sea, and African Coast, with British colonial politics in the Far East, the rise of the East India Company, and the conquest of India. Except for the general misconception of buried treasure, Captain Kidd's career had little connection with the West Indies.

Nevertheless the legend exists and will continue to flourish as the green bay tree in an atmosphere of eternal summer, just as long as humans keep on being human in their fascination with the "get-rich-quick" scheme. The ill-advised will keep right on putting more money into the ground than is ever extracted, hunting for pirate gold, just as treasure hunters keep on looking for "Lost Dutchman" gold mines and "Coronado's Treasure," so great and so subtle is the attraction of the idea no matter how contrary it may be to common sense and reasoning.



CHAPTER EIGHT

Woodes Rogers

FOR UPWARD of two years the pirate commonwealth on New Providence flourished and prospered unmolested by anybody. But the extent and degree of their depredations had not escaped notice. The more the colony grew, the more legitimate seaborne commerce suffered, since that was what the settlement fed upon. Never before in human history had so many ships been so outrageously plundered. The trade between England and its West Indian possessions, principally Jamaica, was vital. Piratical depredation reached a point where the trade was brought to a virtual standstill. Merchants did not dare venture out in single, lightly armed ships. They now went in slow, expensively armed convoys for fear of pirates, and even that was no proof that the goods would land anywhere except in the wrong hands—and New Providence. Insurance rates on cargoes bound for the West Indies rose to dismal proportions. Profits were huge if a merchant could deliver his goods, but they were usually intercepted. This was worse than exasperating.

Although piracy had started and flourished in the West

Indies, piratical mischief was by no means confined to the Caribbean. The West Indies, with New Providence as a sort of capital, had the greatest concentration of pirates, but it also acted as a kind of training school from which piracy spread farther afield.

The Caribbean waters greatly favored the smaller and less able operatives. The nature of the locality put small craft at a premium, but required no great knowledge of the art of navigation. Among the quantity of pirates who sprung up at this time were a few accomplished navigators and leaders with ambitions that outstripped West Indian potentialities. As soon as these had attracted a sufficiently large crew and had taken an ocean-going vessel capable of making such an extensive voyage, they migrated toward richer plunder, cruising the west African coast, Madagascar, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. The East India companies—English, French and Portuguese—were opening a brisk and lucrative business with India, with rich freights plying back and forth, almost asking to be plundered. Also the slave trade had made the various “factories” along the African coast profitable prey. Moslem pilgrim ships, usually well-stored with treasure, plied between India and the Red Sea. These vessels were frequently European in origin with European crews, but chartered by the Faithful of India bent on making the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The piratical ventures into these remote waters required better equipment, both of men and ships, than the simpler procedures of the West Indies. Just the same, pirates appeared who ably met all requirements. Bartholomew Rob-

erts, most successful of them all, operated a whole fleet of pirate ships and, before his death, boasted of the plundering of over four hundred tall ships. Edward England, graduate of New Providence, turned his attention to Madagascar from which as a base he pillaged successfully for years. The fabulous—and for the most part apocryphal—exploits of Avery centered in the Indian Ocean. Captain Kidd's articles of agreement with his employers expressly directed him to scour the Red Sea for English pirates.

These deep-sea pirates were few in number but exceedingly troublesome, and their depredations amounted to much more than the value of the prizes taken. They were impeding the traffic between England and India. England's domination over India was in its early formative stages. The French and Portuguese were active competitors, and even the Great Mogul, a formidable native power to be reckoned with, complained about the damage done by pirates which he, unable to make accurate differentiation, always described as "English" pirates.

But the source and beginning of these exotic pirates was the West Indies. If the rising tide of world-wide piracy was to be checked it must be done at the point of origin.

England's supremacy of the sea and of the ocean-borne carrying trade had just started on the ascendant. It had been growing slowly for a long time but now it was expanding and developing with great rapidity. The merchant mariner of England was becoming the power behind the throne. All deference was paid to royalty and to landed aristocracy, but the real genius and driving force of the expanding

Empire was the London and west of England merchant sailor. These amphibious traders who were to make the British Empire what it was had only just forged themselves into a unit within the English body politic that would become the byword and titular genius of world-wide shipping—Lloyd's.

Edward Lloyd, if there is index in the name, was a Welshman, a breed proverbial for a certain kind of business acumen. He was the proprietor of a coffeehouse on Tower Street in London, which for some unaccountable reason became the favorite resort of the marine insurance business. Even today in Europe it is a general rule to find small businesses holding their offices in cafés, or coffeehouses. Not large enough or sufficiently flourishing to rent office space of his own, a businessman lets it be understood that between certain hours he may be found at a certain place of public refreshment. The proprietor enters into the idea and encourages others in the same line of business to make his public room their place of business too. Lloyd's Coffee House became the center of the marine insurance business, the nerve center of Britian's marine interests, and the artery of the lifeblood of the Empire. But if it started as a sort of accident, it persisted and developed into the colossal business it became through good management and careful planning. As the insurance business adjunct of the coffeehouse expanded, Lloyd moved to a better location on Lombard Street, which was the old goldsmiths' section of the city, the bankers' bailiwick, the London Wall Street of the time. Lloyd published a shipping news for his patrons which kept

them posted on the arrival, departure, and other particulars of shipping.

Lloyd's was still a coffeehouse at the time the New Providence pirates were at the zenith of activity, and few patrons were served who did not have a maritime interest. It was here, thousands of miles removed from the pirate refuge in the Bahamas, that the machinery was set in motion to destroy the budding outlaw commonwealth.

There was no secret about the focus of pirates on New Providence. Everyone knew where they lived and made their headquarters. But there was a grave question about how to extirpate several thousand first-class fighting men, well-skilled in the navigation of waters as yet uncharted and little known.

As early as 1705, merchants familiar with the West Indies had voiced the opinion that something should be done about the then uninhabited Bahamas and, as convention required, addressed Queen Anne through the House of Lords to the effect that "The French and Spaniards had twice during time of war overrun and plundered the Bahama Islands and that there was no form of government there. The harbor of the Isle of New Providence might be easily put in posture of defense and it would be of dangerous consequence should these islands fall into the hands of an enemy. Wherefore the Lords humbly besought Her Majesty to use such methods as she thought proper for taking said islands into her own hands in order to secure same to the Crown of this kingdom and to the security and advantage of the trade thereof."

Nothing was done about it until the pirates had moved in and made an insufferable nuisance of themselves. Then the merchants congregating at Lloyd's really had something more than theoretical dangers to cope with. These pirates were a real menace and it was hurting. Whitehall, needled into action, expressed itself in its usual sedate language.

"Complaint having been made to his Majesty [George I] by a great Number of Merchants, Masters of Ships and others as well as by several Governors of His Majesty's Islands and Plantations in the West Indies that the Pyrates are grown so numerous that they infest not only the Seas near Jamaica but even those of the Northern Continent of America, and that unless some effectual Means be used the whole Trade from Great Britain to those Parts will not only be obstructed but in imminent Danger of being lost; His Majesty has, upon mature Deliberation of Council been pleased to order a proper Force to be employed for the suppressing said pirates."

And a list of warships of the fifth and sixth rate are listed as detailed to patrolling West Indian water, "for the annoying of Pyrates and the Security of the Trade."

Warships of the Royal Navy had been used for hunting pirates before and had been singularly unsuccessful at it. Increasing the number of similar battleships apparently did not "annoy" the pirates any more or increase the "security of the trade," either. If the Coast Guard service of today relied on battleships for the apprehension of smugglers and

rum runners, they would not be any more successful. A magnificent show of strength impresses everyone but nimble malefactors, who find such ostentation a trifling impediment and easily avoided.

Merchant ships continued to be taken and cargoes plundered all over the West Indies without noticeable cessation. Sometimes in a burst of bravura a pirate sloop would even attack the pursuer, not that the rovers ever expected to take a prize but just to cock a derisive snoot at His Majesty's Navy. After an exchange of cannonade the pirate would always sheer away and be out of sight in a few hours, lost in and among the countless islands, reefs, and shoals that stud the Caribbean.

Once or twice a patrol or station ship would catch a pirate, but only when they happened to find one who was ill-advised enough to be on shore cleaning his ship and in no position to get away. That is what happened to John Martel and his crew. He was ashore careening his ship when His Majesty's frigate *Scarborough*, 30 guns, discovered him. The battleship moved in and promptly blew the little pirate sloop to kindling wood. They even captured and yardarmed some of its stranded crew, but Martel and most of his men fled into the interior of the jungles where the landing party could not follow. No one ever knew what eventually happened to Martel, except he was never heard from again. The best the Royal Navy could do was maroon him in this rather unofficial fashion.

When piracy first made itself felt as an economic nuisance, only the merchants directly affected protested. Then all

merchants began to feel the pinch, and from Lloyd's, instead of straggling yelps of financial pain, rose a full-throated howl of commercial protest. Everybody was losing money. The something that was going to be done had better be copious and prompt.

But the way that shipping interests, centered in Edward Lloyd's Coffee House, went about the purpose of suppressing piracy is novel in this age when the government is expected to do all the work for everybody. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, private individuals singly, or collectively as a group of business associates, did all the actual work and also put up the necessary capital. Then they persuaded the King to bestow his regal sanction on the project.

West Indian piracy was clearly centered in the embryonic outlaw commonwealth at New Providence. Brute force of arms could destroy this nest of sea wolves, but those most deeply interested in shipping knew perfectly well that such a frontal attack would only scatter the pack and that they would all converge again somewhere else. It would annoy the pirates but not remove their menace. The thing to do was take over both New Providence and the pirates as well; this was less expensive, and more efficient, but they would have to find someone qualified for the difficult administrative task. The next move was to persuade the King to make a proclamation of pardon and general amnesty. This had been done before and had met with a certain measure of success. A great many accepted the pardon for past misdeeds and promised to be good in the future. This was

especially true of elderly and successful pirates who were ready to retire on their profits anyway and wanted nothing better than a chance to enjoy relative security. Younger and still ambitious pirates usually relapsed to their old ways—"returned like dogs to their vomit," as the peevish merchant seamen expressed it. But a general pardon always meant a division of the piratical forces.

The same technique was familiar in the London city affairs, where the streets after dark swarmed with highwaymen, footpads, cutthroats and pickpockets. Every time the conditions in the city became too bad the Lord Mayor called out the "trained bands," the rather informal city militia. The trained bands were composed almost exclusively of those who at all other times were highwaymen, footpads, cutthroats, etc. "Set a thief to catch a thief" worked out as a practical measure very well indeed. Something of the sort could be worked out for the island of New Providence, that thorn in the growing flesh of Lloyd's Coffee House.

With all due solemnity and without any great amount of urging, the king made his proclamation, which after all was going to cost him nothing, and stood an excellent chance of being profitable:

"By the King
"A PROCLAMATION FOR SUPPRESSING
OF PYRATES.

"GEORGE R.

"Whereas we have received Information, that several

persons, Subjects of GREAT BRITAIN, have, since the 24th Day of June, in the Year of our Lord, 1715, committed divers Pyracies and Robberies upon the High Sea, in the West Indies or adjoining our Plantations, which hath and may Occasion great Damage to the Merchants of GREAT BRITAIN and others trading into those Parts; and tho' we have appointed such Force as we judge sufficient for suppressing said Pyrates, yet the more effectually to make an End to the Same, we have thought fit, by and with the Advice of our Privy Council, to Issue this our Royal Proclamation; and we do hereby promise and declare, that in Case any of the said Pyrates shall on or before, the 5th of September, in the Year of our Lord, 1718, surrender him or themselves, to one of our Principal Secretaries of State in GREAT BRITAIN or IRELAND or to any Governor or Deputy Governor of any of our Plantations beyond the Seas; every such Pyrate and Pyrates so surrendering him or themselves, as aforesaid, shall have our gracious Pardon, of and for such, his or their Piracy, or Pyracies, by him or them committed, before the 5th of JANUARY, next ensuing. And we do hereby strictly charge and command all our Admirals, Captains, and other Officers at Sea, and all our Governors and Commanders of any Forts, Castles, or other Places in our Plantations, and all our Officers, Civil and Military, to seize and take such of the Pyrates, who shall refuse or neglect to surrender themselves accordingly. And we do further hereby declare, that in Case any Person or Persons, on or after, the 6th Day of SEPTEMBER, 1718, shall discover or seize, or cause or procure to be discovered and seized, any one or more of

the said Pyrates, so refusing or neglecting to surrender themselves as aforesaid, so as they may be brought to Justice and convicted of the said Offense such Person or Persons, so making such Discovery and Seizure, or causing or procuring such Discovery and Seizure to be made, shall have and receive as a Reward for same, viz., for any Commander of any private Ship or Vessel, the sum of 100 £ for every Lieutenant, Master, Boatswain, Carpenter and Gunner the sum of 40 £ for every inferior Officer the sum of 30 £ and for every Private Man the Sum of 20 £. And if any Person or Persons, belonging to, and being Part of the Crew, of any such Pirate Ship and Vessel, shall on or after the said sixth Day of SEPTEMBER, 1718, seize and deliver, or cause to be seized and delivered, any Commander or Commanders, of such Pyrate Ship or Vessel, so that he or they may be brought to Justice, and convicted of said Offence, such Person or Persons, as a Reward for same, shall receive for such Commander the Sum of 200 £ which said Sums, the Lord Treasurer, or the Commissioners of our Treasury for the Time being, are hereby required and desired to pay accordingly.

“Given at our Court, at HAMPTON-COURT the fifth Day of SEPTEMBER, 1717, in the fourth Year of our Reign.

“God save the KING.”

Such was the way British shipping interests went about the suppression of piracy and the conversion of the outlaw stronghold into a royal colony, which could be better controlled. But there was a slight legal impediment. The Bahamas had already been granted to a group of private citi-

zens, the Lords Proprietors. It is true they had lost actual possession of the islands, and were impotent to assert their title, but the title was theirs just the same. This moribund stock company was prevailed upon to surrender all its claims to the Crown.

The queer way in which Crown and mercantile private interests combined to take over the Bahamas remains to this day a baffling puzzle compounded of governmental bureaucracy combined with private initiative, but it set the precedent for much of the British colonial expansion that was to follow.

The influence of Lloyd's and the Commissions of Trade selected Captain Woodes Rogers, a private citizen, to head the proposed expedition. Rogers, then at the zenith of his fame, had already submitted on his own initiative a memorandum for the colonizing of the Bahamas by reputable colonists. Rogers' personal friend Addison, then Secretary of State, confirmed his appointment as Captain General and Governor in Chief in and over the Bahamas in America. For his services in this matter, Rogers was leased the quit rents and royalties of the island by the Crown for the next twenty-one years, if he was smart enough to collect them. The arrangement was £50 for the first seven years, £100 for the next seven, and £200 for the remainder. The personnel of the expedition was made up partly of soldiers then on garrison duty in England and partly of ambulatory cases drafted from Chelsea military hospital. Two frigates of the Royal Navy were ordered to attend to the transportation of Woodes Rogers and his force. Under the circumstances it

is not surprising that it took exactly a year for the expedition to get organized and arrive at New Providence.

Nothing less than the genius of its leader could have succeeded in such a wild undertaking. Rogers is now one of history's forgotten men. Forgotten even in England who owed to him, perhaps more than any other single individual, the colonial technique that was to make the British Empire what it became.

Little is actually known about Woodes Rogers, although he was a kind of national hero in his day, whose name was on everyone's tongue and always with the phrase which became almost his trade mark, "Woodes Rogers, he that took the Acapulcho Ship." This was a daring exploit, even in an age when daring was commonplace. The very fact that he wrote a book about it, *A Cruising Voyage around the World*, which was and still is a classic of its kind and a best-seller in its day, should have preserved his memory, but it hasn't. Now, except for chance references in his own text, almost nothing is known about him.

Historical neglect may be traceable, perhaps, to the fact that he was not of the nobility, was not and never became titled. His age was one where titles were oftentimes more important than the wearers. He was a plain, middle-class merchant mariner, a west of England man and descendant of many generations of seafaring ancestors. The Bristol merchant sailors of whom he was one had suffered greatly from the depredations of Spanish and French privateers during the war of the Spanish Succession. Rogers had suffered so much in the loss of his own ships he thought some-

thing should be done about it. Together with a number of fellow merchant sailors, all Bristol men, he formed a stock company, and all together they bought and fitted out a pair of private men-of-war, the *Duke* and the *Duchess*. In 1708 under Woodes Rogers' command this private fleet set sail to recoup their owner's fortunes. Three years later the *Duke* and *Duchess* reappeared and with them an impressive Spanish galleon they had captured. "And so home again, after a long & fatiguing voyage" was the closing phrase in the log book. They had circumnavigated the globe, sacked the fortified Spanish city of Guayaquil on the South American Coast, a profitable transaction in itself, and then taken the Spanish Plate ship from Manila to Mexico, the annual "Acapulcho Ship." It was incredible treasure that they had brought half around the world home, £800,000.

Nothing like this had happened in England since the days of Francis Drake, and Drake's dividends were skittle-pins compared to the wealth taken by Woodes Rogers. His fortune, and that of his associates and crew, was made. Woodes Rogers retired into domestic obscurity, which he relished, since he had not seen his wife and family for some time.

If nothing else, one episode on his eventful "cruise" should have immortalized him forever. For he brought back with him a Scottish seaman they had found marooned on the island of Juan Fernandez in the South Pacific. His name was Alexander Selkirk and his story, which Rogers recorded in dutiful detail, is the source of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

Few had gone around the world before him: none with

such consummate success in profits, in the notorious difficulties of discipline presented by so long a voyage in uncharted and hostile waters, and with a crew at all times in good control. And this was not a task force of the Regular Navy in which unruly crews—and all crewmen were unruly—could be flogged and hanged into obedience; this was a private venture, conducted along democratic self-governing lines. Privateers were one-directional pirates, and yet he had succeeded in keeping his men, and their activities, always clearly within the strict letter of their commission.

Woodes Rogers' journal of his voyage around the world makes no pretense to any literary style of any kind. He describes himself as a plain sailorman, describing what he saw in everyday language. Yet he was a friend of both Addison and Steele, the greatest literary figures of their time, and certainly must have been familiar, from contact at least, with the world of polished letters. As well as being an accomplished sailor, Rogers was a businessman in the highest connotation of the term. He had a keen eye on the financial solvency of his expedition at all times, both as regards the present actualities and also future possibilities. He was out to make money and also do all he could to promote and encourage English trade. In him the acquisitive was so blended with an equal share of the inquisitive that all he saw or heard of interested him enough to make entry in his journal, whether it was the administrative techniques of the Jesuits (whom he despised), or the habits of sea lions—all was grist to his mill. A good observer's observations have an immortal quality that is never the function of

the age in which they happened to live. Xenophon's observations on the cultivation of asparagus and the care and training of horses are as good today as they were when noted down two thousand years ago. He was talking about what he saw, and fundamentally neither the vegetable nor the animal has changed very much since. Few who have opportunity of observation avail themselves of the privilege. Many who went on voyages of discovery really saw but a fraction of what passed before their eyes.

Rogers had an ability, rare then and rare today, of detaching himself from the activities around him and acting for the common good on the purely practical grounds that his own good was therein included. The death of his beloved younger brother, killed in action, distressed him bitterly and yet takes but a pair of poignant sentences of his narrative; for it was more his grief than his company's. When he took the *Acapulcho Ship* a musket ball shattered his upper jaw, disfiguring him for life. His dry comment on this injury is confined to the awkwardness of having to write his orders, for he was unable to speak, and the curious fact that six weeks afterward in a fit of coughing he spat out the bullet which had wounded him.

Rogers must have had an uncanny knowledge of people and an ability to realize their good points and use them to advantage. His pilot on this famous voyage was William Dampier, who had already circumnavigated the globe before him, leaving a train of disaster in his wake. Dampier was a magnificent sailor and probably the worst administrator that ever trod a deck. Rogers' success was partly due to

Dampier's skill, but mostly to the fact that Rogers knew how to employ Dampier's ability and circumvent his shortcomings. Dampier, who was an older man, was not an easy one to handle in a subordinate capacity. Dampier had been all kinds of adventurer, buccaneer, and general desperado too in his time.

The crews of the *Duke* and *Duchess* were no better or worse than the commonality of sailors of the day. In his own words, Rogers described them as "Tinkers, Taylors, Hay-makers and Fiddlers—and one who was a wholesale oilman from London." He also took with him a bulldog. On the whole he described his vessel, when the three-year voyage began, as "a crowded and much pestered ship." Samuel Pepys before him had noticed that "Scamen love their bellies above anything else." Rogers went to great pains to victual his ship far better than was the accepted standard of the time and made especial point to see that quantities of beer and spirits were carried with them. Wrote he, "Good liquor to sailors is preferable to clothing."

His was the greatest administrative virtue there is. He knew when to be severely firm and when to relax, with a perfection of timing and a sense of humor that never failed him.

Just how it happened that those in ultimate authority chose a man like this for the supremely difficult assignment of suppressing piracy will always remain a mystery. Rank, titles, and favoritism were the route to appointment in any capacity. Perhaps no one wanted or would accept the arduous and dangerous task that had so little else to recommend

it. If such were the case and Rogers was a *faute de mieux* appointment, why should he who knew too well what lay ahead have taken it, unless he had intertwined with all his business acumen a kind of missionary spirit?

Almost a year before Rogers and his entourage of broken-down soldiers reached New Providence, the motley inhabitants of the island had heard the news. When the proclamation of pardon to all pirates was made, a bale of formal notices were dispatched to the West Indies as advance warning of what was to come. New Providence heard the news ahead of anyone else in the islands because one of their number captured the ship and brought it with its printed announcements into the pirate stronghold.

One can imagine the pirates, none of whom in the nature of their calling were well exercised in literary and legal matters, spelling out the complex phrasology of the document with dirty and painfully slow finger! But in spite of the way it was worded they soon caught on to the essential meaning. This act of pardon, calculated to divide the pirates' corporate strength, certainly had instant success. Those in port at the time sent out word to all those on cruise and called them back for council meeting. The individual pirate captains, with their quartermasters, met together to decide what to do in the light of this double offer of pardon for their crimes, on the one hand, and the threat of the gallows, on the other. The attraction of the one and the repulsion of the alternative rifted the piratical commonwealth.

Jennings, as much leader and originator of this colony as any one man and still holding great influence, declared he

would accept the pardon. He with his crew and one hundred and fifty others sailed at once to the Bermudas, which was the nearest outpost of Empire, and brought a copy of the Proclamation with them. There they told the news and took the royal pardon, for which they each received a certificate of absolution. From time to time other captains and their crews surrendered, at Charlestown, Barbados or Jamaica. But opinion among individual crews was divided. Some decided to stay where they were, look Woodes Rogers and his expedition over when it came, and, if they saw fit, surrender then. Others were not taking the offer on any terms and sailed away to continue their piratical careers elsewhere. One alone, Charles Vane, stoutly held out for armed defense. He was for strengthening the land defenses and for a trial of strength with the new governor.

New Providence was in a turmoil, some surrendering, some watchfully waiting and prepared to jump to either side but keeping both alternatives open, a few favoring organized resistance. The non-piratical fraction of the populations, the camp followers, had nothing to fear as regards their physical safety but were unhappy about the proposed change of management, although they could not do anything about it one way or the other. They simply stayed where they were because there was no place else to go.

One June evening, watchers on New Providence spotted strange topsails making for the island. As they came closer, a little fleet, two frigates and two attendant sloops, were made out. It was Woodes Rogers, his two tall ships *Delicia* and *Rose*, and the sloops, *Shark* and *Buck*. It was too dark

to enter, so the flotilla anchored outside the double harbor mouth waiting for dawn. There were only a thousand pirates left on the island, most of them under the commands of Hornigold, Burgess, Davis and Carter, and they were all prepared to take the pardon just as soon as Rogers stepped ashore. The harbor defenses were nil. The old fort was in such disrepair only one nine-pounder was still on its carriage and usable. Old "Governor" Sawney, the half-idiot oldest inhabitant, was the only one living in the ruined buildings. Charles Vane and his crew were the only pirates likely to make trouble.

Vane had lately come to the harbor, bringing with him a French brigantine he had just captured, a very rich prize loaded with sugar, indigo, brandy, and wines. Vane and his crew of seventy-five had just had a most successful cruise. They had pillaged a half-dozen smaller vessels and had concentrated all in the brigantine which was now their treasure ship. Vane had acted violently toward the idea of surrendering; in fact, he had terrorized the town for the past two weeks, swearing he would hold the island against God, man or devil. He, so he said, was the Governor of the Island of New Providence.

The appearance and the strength of Woodes Rogers' company apparently wrought some change of heart, for a boat brought out a letter.

"July, 24th, 1718

"To his Excellency the Governor of New Providence

"Your Excellency may please to understand that we are

willing to accept his Majesty's most gracious Pardon on the following Terms, viz.

"That you will suffer us to dispose of all our Goods now in our Possession. Likewise to act as we see fit with every Thing belonging to us, as his Majesty's Act of Grace specifies.

"If your Excellency shall please to comply with this we shall with all Readiness, accept of his Majesty's Act of Grace. If not, we are obliged to stand on our Defence. So conclude

"Your humble Servants

"CHARLES VANE and Company

"P.S. We wait a speedy Answer."

Rogers declined to answer such impudence, but late the following afternoon, the *Rose*, man-of-war, and the sloop *Shark* sailed in and blocked the harbor mouth. Vane saluted them with four guns, which were loaded and damaged the *Rose's* rigging, but it was then too dark for reprisal. Captain Whitney of the *Rose* sent his lieutenant in a boat to treat with Vane. Vane and his crew, who had been drinking a good deal of the cargo of their French prize, showered them with threats, profanity and ridicule and finally sent them back with the message that Vane & Co. would fight it out to the last. At eight o'clock that night when Captain Whitney fired the eight o'clock gun that naval regulations demanded, Vane answered with a round shot that dug another hole in the *Rose*.

It was clear to Rogers that Vane was up to mischief but

in the darkness no one could tell exactly what. A strong breeze bore down the harbor toward the blockading vessels. Suddenly out of the darkness near at hand and rapidly bearing down upon them, came Vane's prize, the French brigantine, on fire and blazing. Every one of the ex-Frenchman's guns had been loaded to the muzzle and directed roughly at the anchored warships. One after another the fire exploded the guns, sending round shot, musket balls and miscellaneous bits of ship chandlery whizzing in all directions. The *Rose* and *Shark* cut cable and ran out to sea ahead of this apparition of moving destruction.

One final and deafening explosion lifted the fire ship's decks and lit the night for a mile around, as the fire reached the powder magazines. In the fading light of this terminal explosion, Vane's sloop, crammed to the gunwales with his unregenerate crew, sped by and out of the now opened harbor mouth and escaped to sea.

It was a dramatic and in ways a beautiful gesture, but Rogers was not one to give over meekly. His two sloops, the fastest sailers in his fleet, were ordered in pursuit of the fleeing pirate and were gaining, when the wily Vane eased his main sheet, set a flying jib, and pulled away into the darkness of the night.

The next morning at daybreak, Woodes Rogers ordered his little fleet into the harbor and took formal possession of the settlement now cleared of pirates, or at least pirates in active practice. Vane's explosive exit the night before seemed to have cleared the atmosphere of at least the balance of unregenerate inhabitants. Those who remained be-

hind gave every appearance of docility, and even welcome to their new governor. A reception committee greeted Rogers as he stepped ashore. Thomas Walker, who introduced himself as a gentleman and Chief Justice of the island, was master of ceremonies seconded by Thomas Taylor, who had the equal effrontery of posing as the President of the Council. Just how they came by such facetious titles is far from clear, but so they called themselves, and Rogers was diplomatic enough to let it pass as that. Their intentions were obviously well meant, even if their credentials might be open to inquiry. The reformed—and already pardoned—pirate captains, Hornigold, Davis, Burgess, Carter, Currant, and Clark, with all their crews, formed a double line up from the beach, through which Rogers marched to the accompaniment of a running fire of muskets overhead.

Businesslike as always, Rogers and his staff mounted to the ruins of the old fort and there opened and read his royal commission as governor, and as a politic gesture had the self-styled "Chief Justice" Walker swear him in. The first matter of business was the appointment of Richard Turnley as chief pilot for the harbor. Then he appointed a factor, who should examine all shipping then in the harbor, inventory cargoes and secure all goods until such time as a court of admiralty could be set up to decide what was the property of pirates, what would be condemned for the Crown, and what was the property of lawful or approximately lawful traders.

The situation of the island was such that Rogers rightly felt he had no time to lose. The force he brought with him

were few in number and poor in quality. They were outnumbered and surrounded ashore by ex-pirates in a doubtful state of repentance. At sea there was a quantity of very active pirates still at large, such as Vane of recent and regrettable memory. Theoretically England and Spain were at peace for the moment, but in such an isolated outpost as this a Spanish force might attack the island at any time, or the war with Spain which was the chronic condition of the time might break out afresh. With such feeble force as he could count upon, he boldly placed the island under martial law and established himself, his staff, and his trusted men in the ruins of the old fort overlooking the harbor. But his numbers were so few he made bold enough to recruit help from the ex-pirates of the settlement below. Commissions were granted to the pardoned pirate captains, Hornigold, Davis, and Burgess, giving them command over trained bands of a rough-hewn militia composed of their former crews. James Bonny and Denis Macarty were commissioned to act under them as subordinate officers. In this way was formed an active, effective, but wholly unreliable kind of standing army of four hundred men—all that were left of the population of pirates.

In matters of civil government Rogers appointed justices of the peace, lower magistrates, and constables to maintain civil order in the motley town of piratical hangers-on. The public works of the settlement which had never been ambitious even under the first Eleutheran colonists had sunk into the obscurity of the jungles during the period of the pirate republic. The undergrowth and thickets surrounding the

town were a constant menace and potential scene for ambush and sneak attack. Underoverseers of public works appointed by the indefatigable Rogers, squads of ex-pirates, were set to clearing the jungle.

The new governor with his soldiers, such as they were, guarded the wreck of the fort; the former pirates now formed into trained bands took care of the town. But there was an acute housing problem. Temporary shelters were improvised from sails stretched over poles until better could be built. Rogers, who had a keen eye for all kinds of details, had seen how native folk housed themselves in the tropics and ordered his men to do likewise. Six holes, at proper intervals, dug into the soft coral rock of the island, socketed uprights forked at the top. Other poles formed rafters and, between the rafters, a lathing of slender twigs. With this as basis, a thatch of palmetto which abounded on the island could be woven quickly into a crude but satisfactory hut. From a wildly disordered gypsy camp, Nassau became transformed into a palm-thatched town which, while far from gaudy, was at least somewhat neat.

Every hand that could be found was put to work reconstructing and strengthening the fort on the hill and making it defensible against attack from either pirates or Spaniards. And they had good grounds to take precautions. Within a week after Rogers' arrival, a message came from Captain Vane, promising to burn the settlement when he got around to it. Vane assumed a grievous tone because the governor had ordered his sloops to chase him. Rogers, nothing at all daunted, ordered the ex-pirate Burgess to take the sloop *Will-*

ing Mind and with fifty stout hands set out to catch Vane, who couldn't be far away. Rogers could ill afford the absence of so many men from work, but there seemed a point in morale that needed strengthening. The *Willing Mind* reappeared in a few days, without having come in sight of Vane. They had found some of his handiwork, though. Almost in sight of New Providence they had found the plundered and half-scuttled hull of the hagboat *Neptune*, late of London; marooned a short way off were its former captain and the few of his crew who had not gone over to Vane.

There is nothing like the ownership of real estate to quicken and consolidate a civic spirit. Property owners have, perforce, a kind of vested interest in their community. Rogers, with this in mind as well as to attract new and better settlers to his new domain, proclaimed a kind of homestead act. Anyone could have full title to a lot of land one hundred and twenty feet square anywhere in or around the town, provided it was not already in the possession of another, if he would build on it a permanent house and do so in a specified length of time. Timber and other building materials would be provided free.

Four days a week, every able-bodied man had to work on the fortifications. Only the officers were exempted from this manual labor draft. In a few months the fort was in repair again and further strengthened by a palisade of heavy logs placed upright all around.

In spite of the homestead inducement and general orderliness that now prevailed, many of the former pirates still

felt a hankering for their former ways. They were having to work with unaccustomed intensity and, although Rogers, knowing his people, had provided them all more than amply with food and drink, they still considered the old days were preferable. However, the affairs of the new colony progressed well enough until a terrible threat suddenly appeared looming over the settlement. The supply of food, and especially liquor, ran low.

The low grumbles of discontent were instantly audible throughout the width and breadth of the island. Beef, pork and rum were the only proper belly timber. With the conservatism traditional in the British cuisine, there was nothing else as suitable for human fare. The English ex-pirate of two hundred years ago, even though surrounded with all manner of fish, turtle and fruits, yearned for his familiar diet.

The effect of the shortage made itself felt, and in no uncertain terms. Silently at night in canoes, skiffs, and fishing smacks, couples or groups of supposedly reformed pirates slipped back to their old ways. The covert trickle threatened to become a tide of backsliders. Of the initial four hundred old pirates more than half backslid and left the island. Rogers' authority began to crumble in an alarming manner. New Providence was so isolated from any other royal colony that might provide succor in this time of distress that there could be no hope from outside. The *Delicia* and the *Rose*, the men-o'-war that had brought Rogers and his entourage hither, had long since sailed away—and with them their supplies of salt pork and beef, grog, and other palatable foods that might have staved off the emergency.

If the island was to remain in Rogers' control, something must be done and he would have to do it. He did, or tried to.

With the co-operation of some of the traders on the island, Rogers commissioned a small fleet to sail for provisions for his famished and now refractory colony. There was the schooner *Batchelder's Adventure*, under Captain Henry White, commander of the fleet, the sloop *Lancaster*, under Captain William Greenway, and the sloop *May*, under Captain John Augur. The ships were freighted with a variety of tempting merchandise of all kinds and dispatched at once to trade with the Spanish colony on Haiti, at Port-au-Prince, where there were plenty of cattle, hogs, and an approved and flourishing distillery.

It was no easy matter selecting the personnel of this relief expedition. Woodes Rogers found himself caught neatly on the horns of a dilemma. The number of dependable and loyal men under his command were few; the number of former pirates nominally reformed were many. He could not afford for safety's sake to detach too many of his reliable men and leave the defenses of the island threatened as they were from outside attack or internal revolt. On the other hand, the cargoes of the little fleet were valuable in themselves and the mission essential to the salvation of the royal authority. There was decided risk in entrusting so much to the dubious integrity of recent, and perhaps not fully regenerate, pirates. But Rogers selected the best men he knew from among the pardoned pirates, appointed Mr. James Carr, a fully reliable man who had come with him from England, as supercargo, and sent them forth. The three

vessels rounded the harbor mouth, turned south and, becoming smaller and smaller against the brilliant blue of the horizon, vanished from view.

For six weeks no word came back. None of the small craft entering the harbor from turtling or hunting trips reported having seen any trace of the little fleet. There was no cause for disquiet in this, for maritime news could be carried only by chance encounter and exchange of word at sea, and no news might as well be good news as grounds for apprehension. But it was about time definite word, or the ships themselves, returned to the island.

One day a launch appeared from the sea sailing laboriously into the harbor, which in itself was a queer craft to come from open water. Launches were small boats of Spanish or French design and primarily intended for rowing in harbors and shoal waters. It was overcrowded with men, its low gunwales almost awash.

But if the boat was foreign in kind, the crew were all well-known characters on the island. George Redding, Benjamin Hutchins and the Betty brothers, Thomas and Matthew, had sailed only a week or so before in their sloop bound on a turtling expedition to some of the outer islands. Now they returned in this exotic rowboat and without their sloop.

The returning turtlers lost no time in presenting themselves before Woodes Rogers. They not only had news of the relief expedition of Captain Greenway, a tale of mutiny, resurgent piracy, and marooning, but they had with them the principal author of the catastrophe, Phineas Bunch,

who lay in the launch wounded and at the point of death.

The town buzzed like a hive with the excitement of the turtler's story. This was like the old days to the majority of the town's inhabitants; to the minority surrounding the governor on the fort overlooking them, this was the first outright defiance of authority and first flagrant breach of discipline. Rogers and his officers questioned Phineas Bunch, who made no bones whatever about his role in the disaster, which was that of ringleader and chief mutineer. There was no need of trial as prelude to the execution of this backslider. Bunch had been a pirate before, had been pardoned, and had now relapsed. The sooner he was hanged the better example it would be to others balanced on the brink of resurgent piracy.

Plans were immediately made for a prompt hanging of the miscreant Bunch the following day. All night workmen hastily erected a scaffold on the ramparts in full view of the seething town below. But Rogers' action though prompt was still too tardy.

During the night Phineas Bunch, pirate, reformed pirate, mutineer, and relapsed pirate died of his wounds, cheating the gallows by a scant few hours. But before his death he told Woodes Rogers all he knew about the mutiny, and this account is in itself as clear a picture as anyone could draw of the slipshod, careless, indecisive way pirates in general went about their work. The lack of a crisp, well-co-ordinated plan and discipline among themselves did more to bring about defeat than any other factor and is well exemplified in the confession of Phineas Bunch.



CHAPTER NINE

The Mutiny of Phineas Bunch

THE THREE ships—the schooner *Batchelder's Adventure*, and the sloops *Lancaster* and *May*—had sailed as far as an isolated little island called Green Key on their first day out of New Providence. There they anchored for the night, since there were shoals lying in the course ahead of them and it would be wise to come up with them during daylight. Also, they were short of fresh meat and knew they could do a little hunting here before proceeding. A year or so before two New Providence men, Joe Bay and a mulatto named Sims, had stocked the island with two sows and a boar.

Richard Turnley, appointed pilot of the expedition due to his influence at the fort, was also an accomplished hunter. He went ashore to see what he could shoot for their supper. The island is only nine miles in circumference and densely wooded. The wild cabbage palmetto and the great variety of fruit and herbs with which the little island was crowded apparently had nourished the animals well. Turnley returned in an hour with a hog of monstrous size across his shoul-

ders. The carcass was split three ways, a third allotted to each vessel. That night all ate well.

After supper, Greenway, commander of the expedition, and Captain White of the *Lancaster* came aboard Augur's sloop for a consultation about the next day's sailing directions. They agreed that if they upped anchor between ten and eleven that night, they would be up to the reefs by daybreak. Then Greenway and White returned to their vessels.

But not long after their departure, Phineas Bunch, Denis Macarty, and a few others came over from the *Lancaster*. They heard that Richard Turnley and James Carr had some beer on board, beer that had been given into Carr's custody as supercargo, with orders to use it as a lubricant for the Spanish officialdom of Port-au-Prince. Carr, nothing loath, went below and fetched up a round of bottles for one and all. Together with Captain Augur, they all sat around on the poop deck in the cool of the evening in convivial session. But before the second round of beer bottles went down, a faintly ominous element entered the conversation. Bunch and Macarty began relating with obvious gusto some of the adventures of their former and piratical lives.

"A pirate's life," concluded Bunch, "is the only life for a man o' spirit!" Those who did not concur thought it wisdom to say nothing. Then suddenly Bunch started to his feet, elevated by beer and enthusiasm.

"Damme, I'll be Capt'n aboard this here vessel!"

"She don't want no better Capt'n nor I," countered Augur.

Then the conversation drifted off.

"We got the brightest arms in all this fleet," broke in Bunch, after an interval and apropos of nothing. And Augur's men in rebuttal produced a number of cutlasses which had just been burnished and sharpened that day. Among the lot was young Mr. Carr's silver-hilted sword, for Carr had been a midshipman in the Royal Navy and was therefore a gentleman.

"Whose 's this?" demanded Bunch, drawing the blade and waving it around his head.

"'Tis mine," said Carr.

"And handsome it is," added Bunch, marching around the poop deck with it. "But I'll return it as soon as I have done."

Flourishing the weapon around, Bunch returned with renewed animation to the subject of piracy as a gainful and otherwise satisfactory life work. One wild swing of the blade struck Mr. Carr across the shoulders.

"Have a care," warned Turnley. "Mr. Carr don't take such usage."

Whereupon there began a wrangling, and not very coherent, dispute about the matter, during which Denis Macarty stole away toward the cabin. A few of his companions followed him. The ship's arms chest lay in the cabin and in a moment they had wrenched the lid open and helped themselves.

Macarty in an absent-minded kind of way began singing a song, familiar to one and all and, like so many marine ballads of its kind, probably unprintable in its entirety.

“Oh, did not you promise me
That you would marry me?”

It was a signal. For no sooner had Bunch heard this than he roared out, “By God, that I will! For I’m the parson now,” and with that he hit the unfortunate Mr. Carr a resounding thwack across the back. Both Mr. Carr and Turnley sprang upon him at once and a general fisticuff ensued, until Macarty and his companions jumped out of the cabin, each with a naked cutlass in one hand and a loaded pistol in the other.

“Do the Governor’s dogs offer to resist?” they shouted, and belabored Carr and Turnley with their cutlasses, firing pistols next their cheeks so close they powder-burned them. Both men fell on their knees begging for their lives.

“Hoy, Captain Greenway!” hailed the mutineers across the darkened water. “Come aboard, there be earnest business afoot.”

Greenway, suspecting nothing more than a roughhouse on this consort, took two men and rowed over. Macarty led him aft to the cabin.

“You’re a prisoner,” said he. “All resistance is vain. All your men are in on this.” To prove his point, the two who had rowed him over appeared in the doorway armed with cutlass and pistol like the other mutineers.

Captain White was then lured on board by the same stratagem. The crewmen almost to a man were either in the plot or submitted and agreed to join the mutineers.

Even Captain Augur, when he saw how matters sat,

decided to join in. He had been in his time a well-known and well-regarded pirate.

In a few minutes and with an easy dispatch that showed familiarity with such matters, the mutineers had taken over the little fleet and had coerced all but a few to join them in a return to piracy.

Among the few were the two captains, Greenway and White, who steadfastly declined to have any share in piracy. But these two captains were "artists" in navigation, an accomplishment shared by few of the mutineers, who for the most part were common seamen and wholly ignorant of the higher arts of their trade. The mutineers needed their services and so the pair were forced to serve them, as prisoners, on parole.

Turnley, Carr, and a few others who also refused to join the mutineers presented a slight problem, especially Turnley and Carr. Everyone hated Turnley cordially, because he had ingratiated himself with the new governor. Carr was a Royal Navy officer and a gentleman, which was sufficient damnation in itself. For a while they thought the best thing would be just to kill them and be quit of the matter, but the majority felt that such would be too good a fate. Eventually the vote went for marooning, and letting them starve to death. Accordingly the prisoners were stripped naked and tumbled into an open boat, equipped with one oar, and told to be gone. Paddling with the one oar and their hands, the little group of nudists made their way to desolate Green Key.

But the next morning Denis Macarty and a party of the

mutineers landed on the island and told the maroons to come aboard. The maroons were gullible enough to think that there might have been a change of heart. Once on board again the mutineers devised a kind of game—when the boatswain piped “heave-o,” they paddled the naked men with the flat of their cutlasses around the deck and only stopped when the “belay” sounded. Then they inquired for the silver snuffbox and watch belonging to Mr. Carr. The articles were promptly located for them in the cabin. Someone remembered that Thomas Rich, one of the now well-drubbed maroons, had had a handsome gold watch. Then the game began again, in spite of the fact that Rich swore the watch had been left behind at New Providence. They were all beaten harder than ever until one of the mutineers, remembering, confirmed Rich’s statement. Then the beating stopped.

Some streak of excess stubbornness was aroused in Captain Greenway from witnessing such conduct. Now he positively refused to serve his captors. He voluntarily joined the maroons, in spite of the protest of some that Greenway was a Bermudian and, like all his fellow islanders, could swim like a fish, an accomplishment shared by very few sailors. But he finally persuaded them that even he could not swim the one hundred miles back to New Providence, so they let him go.

There were now eight naked men who made the best way they could in their oarless boat back to the desert island of Green Key.

The mutineers spent all the next day overhauling their

ships and refitting them for piratical adventures. Greenway's former command, the sloop *Lancaster*, was not suitable for the work and so the pirates took everything of value out of her. Ashore a mile away, the naked maroons watched their former shipmates and speculated. After a while they saw the pirates quit the *Lancaster* and row back to the other ships. Greenway slipped into the water and swam back to his now-abandoned sloop, in the hope of finding some scrap of food, knife, hatchet, or something left behind. He and his companions had not eaten for forty-eight hours and had literally nothing to use but their naked hands. The pirates saw Greenway emerge from the sea and climb on board and thought he might have changed his mind. They rowed over to see if he had had enough and would join them now. Greenway still refused but managed to do so in such a way that they good-humoredly told him he could have his looted sloop—but only after they had set sail. Hungry as ever, Greenway swam back ashore to his companions, but they were not destined to be left alone.

Phineas Bunch and a number of his shipmates rowed ashore later in the day bringing a picnic luncheon, most of which was in liquid form, with them. They sat around drinking and eating in front of their famished victims, baiting them. Finally they again beat them all carefully all around, gave each one a sip of wine and a biscuit apiece, and rowed away again.

Not long afterward a turtling sloop from New Providence appeared, a fine fast-sailing little vessel, under the command of Benjamin Hutchins, who was a well-known pilot

and navigator. The pirates lost no time in scooping in both sloop and crew. Hutchins, when he knew of the maroons on the Key, consented to serve the pirates as a "forced man," that is, one who would have no share in future plunder.

The little fleet of pirates was getting ready to set sail and away, when inconsistently enough they again sent word to the maroons ashore and told them they could now have the abandoned *Lancaster*. But when these naked wretches had painfully paddled to her they found several of the mutineers there. The mutineers ordered them to furl the main sheet and cut the foresail down to the size of a jib, so they could not sail so fast. Then they were allowed each a bite of beef and a little water, and told to set out for New Providence if they wished.

But this detachment of pirates had no sooner left than another appeared, led by Bunch and Macarty, who, feeling the effects of their picnic, were in very high spirits. Swearing and damning all and sundry, they slashed the rigging and sails to ribbons with their cutlasses, making a shambles of the little sloop. Then they all rowed away, taking with them the maroons' oarless rowboat.

The wretched men were now in worse position than before. None could swim except Greenway. They had no food on the sloop and no means of even reaching the island which lay a mile away. But for a single omission, the pirates might well have condemned their enemies to a hideous fate.

Rummaging around in every nook and cranny of the sloop, they found that only one useful thing had been overlooked. It was an old and broken hatchet blade. With

this they set to work at once sharpening wooden sticks to use as marlinspikes. All hands turned to with a will, unlaying and relaying the severed cordage. Greenway, with the precious blade tied around his neck, swam back to the island and cut down four trees, which he made into a pair of crude rafts for his less amphibious colleagues. In a week's time they had rerigged the sloop and, making trip after trip ashore on their rafts, had brought out fruit, berries and cabbage palm enough to stock the ruined sloop for a voyage back to New Providence. Meanwhile they had beaten old nails into fishhooks and had subsisted on fish. They had just hoisted their crazy-quilt sail and set out on the perilous return voyage, when to their horror the pirate fleet which had so recently quitted them returned.

They drove their sloop as near to shore as they dared and then took to their log rafts, abandoning ship for the jungle hiding places of the island. For greater security they climbed trees and hid in the dense foliage, from which vantage point they watched with dismay while the pirates took their sloop, towed it into deep water, chopped down the mast, and then sunk it. Several times the pirates landed on the Key and hallooed to them, but no one answered or could be found.

Stark naked, on an uninhabited island, with only one broken hatchet blade to help them, the eight miserable men saw the pirates again set sail and vanish over the horizon. There was no hope of return now unless some chance fisherman might accidentally put in here; it might be a year or five years before any human being would come to this remote

and desolate spot. They were reduced to the basic necessities of keeping alive.

For a week they lived on berries, shellfish, and periwinkles. There was no fishing now, for they could not get far enough offshore, but they discovered that the sting ray was edible—after a fashion. These creatures came into shoal water and the maroons found they could wade out and spear them with sharpened sticks. They had no fire to cook over, so they dried the fish in the sun, dipping it repeatedly in salt water until it was as stiff as leather. Then they could eat it.

Again the pirates returned, and again the maroons took to the trees. But this time it was evident that the pirates considered their victims had had enough. Quixotically, they sent a single man, unarmed, ashore who called to them that they would be given food and drink now and be no longer ill-treated.

The pirates were as good as their word. For as long as they anchored off the island, the maroons lived on board with them, eating and drinking all they wished. The pirates even allowed them two or three old blankets to cover their sunburned nakedness. But when it came time for departure, the pirates would let them take nothing ashore. George Redding, one of the men the pirates forced out of the crew of the turtling sloop, slipped one of the maroons a tinderbox—the most precious gift, under the circumstances, that one man ever gave another. For without fire, human existence is almost impossibly difficult. This time the pirates forcibly detained among them Greenway and two others, leaving five of the original number remarooned on the island.

But the tinderbox made all the difference in the world to these forlorn five. With fire they could now extend their diet to a far wider variety of fruit and animal life, and lived much better than was formerly possible. This island interlude lasted for a fortnight, when again the pirate flotilla returned. There were no overtures of pity for them this time. No one called them on board for either punishment, as at first, or food, as they had done later. But just before the pirates again sailed away, one of their boats put ashore, deposited a number of things, and then returned. Shortly thereafter the whole little fleet set sail and disappeared.

When the maroons came down from their treetop retreats, they found that certainly their persecutors had suffered a change of heart. There by the water's edge lay a forty-pound keg of flour, a bushel of salt, two bottles of gunpowder, a supply of both ball and small shot, and two muskets. There was an excellent axe, a dozen or so knives, pots and pans, and—of all curious things—two dogs. They were hunting dogs, of a kind bred and trained for hunting wild hog, and in very general use on board ship in the West Indies of this time, when wild hog formed the basis of most ship provisioning.

Now the maroons could really establish themselves and, even if they could not get away, they could manage to support life on more comfortable terms. Turnley, who was a professional hunter, shouldered the muskets, took the dogs, and went into the interior of the island for wild hog. The others chopped poles and palm fronds and built themselves

a hut. Before long Turnley returned with a splendid hog and that night they ate their fill. Four days later Turnley went out again, and again bagged a fine hog, but when he returned to camp he found it burned to the ground and his companions fled, he knew not where. Almost instantly he found himself surrounded, and by his mutineer ex-ship-mates. The pirates had come back again.

This time, except for the mischief they had made, all they wanted of him was the hog he had just killed. In return they gave him a bottle of rum and the promise that they would never return. This promise was one they never had an opportunity of breaking.

All three shiploads of pirates had sailed merrily and somewhat boozily away toward the salt ponds at the northern tip of Yumeta Island, one of the most easterly of the Bahama group. When they reached there they spied three sloops at anchor and, anxious for prizes, cracked on all sail and bore down upon them. Sloops from New York were in the habit of loading salt here and would make good enough prize for not too ambitious pirates. The pirate ships did not all sail with equal speed. In a short time, they were all strung out some distance apart. And so it was that the first of the attackers, commanded by the unfortunate Phineas Bunch, swept alongside the intended prizes about dusk that evening. He was greeted by a devastating broadside and withering volley of well-directed musketry to such effect that Bunch received his mortal hurt, and numbers of pirates were killed outright. The rest dove overside and fled ashore to the island.

The second pirate ship, thinking the uproar was of Bunch's doing, followed suit and with the same results. So did the third.

They had miscalculated. These were not New York salt merchants but three crack Spanish coast-guard vessels, under the command of a bold and enterprising fellow, an Irishman called Turncoat Joe. He was so called because, having once been in the Royal Navy, he then had turned first pirate and afterward joined the Spanish service. Joe knew a pirate when he saw one coming and knew exactly what to do about it.

Those of the pirates who had escaped with their lives were stranded on the salt ponds where they would do harm to no one for the moment. Turncoat Joe took the pirate ships, or what remained of them. Anyone who wanted the surviving pirates ashore might have them. He thought it would be only courtesy to tell Rogers about all this. He knew Hutchins, the forced turtler, and so he gave him one of his launches, which was the way the news—and the rapidly declining Bunch—got back to New Providence.

When word first reached Woodes Rogers of the marooning of Turnley and his companions he immediately dispatched a relief boat to take them off Green Key. John Sims, a Negro, one of those who had originally stocked Green Key with hogs, was commissioned to take his two-masted boat, a notably fast sailing vessel, and six men to the rescue of the stranded men. When he got there Sims had trouble persuading the maroons to come out of their treetops; they, at first and naturally, thought the pirates had come back again.

When they saw Sims' ebony features they knew none of their enemy were Negro and hailed him.

"Comfortable news. Relief!" Sims called back.

These were the best words these five men had heard for many weeks.

But Rogers' tenuous authority had been so jeopardized by this bold mutiny of men whom he had trusted and the resurgence of the old pirate days, he was far from content with the rescue of his loyal men alone. He wanted the malefactors and wanted an equally bold example made of them. It is characteristic that he should have selected for the purpose Benjamin Hornigold, a reformed pirate, but one whose reformation Rogers trusted. He made no mistake this time.

Everyone knew from the men who had come to New Providence in the Spanish launch what had happened after the pirates left Green Key for the last time.

Hornigold, commanding the sloop *Willing Mind*, set out after the pirates stranded by the salt ponds on Yumeta Island, where Turncoat Joe had left them. He was careful to select his crew from those who were unacquainted with any of his quarry. Only Richard Turnley, ambitious to turn tables on his former persecutors, went with him and was to act as identifying witness. Hornigold had been too long a pirate in his bad, old unregenerate days to have any wish for unnecessary and avoidable violence. The *Willing Mind* anchored off the salt ponds, behaving for all the world as though it had come for a cargo of salt. Sure enough two or three of the pirates emerged from the bushes and onto

the beach; the others hung back in ambush waiting for a chance to seize the sloop. But when the sloop's boat rowed inshore and yet would not land, the ambuscaders lost patience and they all came from hiding and lined the sands.

"Come ashore!" they called. "We be poor shipwrecked men, 'most perishing for want."

The boat went back to the sloop and then returned to the shore with a few bottles of wine and some biscuit. Its crew were all strangers to the pirates, and one of their number passed himself as master of the vessel.

"I learn ye be castaway," said he.

"We are," said the pirates, devouring the biscuits, "and what ship are you and where bound?"

"We are for salt," said he, "and bound back for New York."

The pirates wanted to ship as passengers, saying that they had friends in New York who would make good their passage. The "Captain" meditated. Sixteen added men were too many for his slender stock of provisions. But he would go back to the sloop and check his stores—maybe they could take some if not all the castaways. When they rowed back they took eight of the stranded pirates with them. On board, the visitors were conducted to the cabin where sat Hornigold, whom they all knew well, and at his elbow none other than Richard Turnley, big as life and twice as natural. Instantly, they were surrounded by armed men and securely ironed. Then the sloop's boat returned for the remainder. They, too, were confronted, ironed, and dumped into the hold with their companions.

Without a shot fired, or too great exertion, Hornigold bagged all his men and had them safe under hatches. Two days later he returned and turned them all over to Rogers.

Law and order never hung by a more slender thread, and Woodes Rogers knew it. He faced attack from his country's enemies, attack from any one or any combination of a number of pirate crews still at large, and now added to all these the very real possibility of revolt at home.

The only factor in his favor was the inherent weakness of piracy—indecisive, often foolish, and vacillating discipline among themselves. The mutiny itself demonstrated this.

Woodes Rogers had slender legal authority for summary punishment. The town of New Providence already rebellious now seethed with revolt and threat of jail delivery of the imprisoned pirates. The balance of power on the island was so delicate that only prompt and decisive action on Rogers' part could keep captors and prisoners in their same relative positions in society.

With what scanty judicial knowledge he possessed, Rogers swore in a council of seven of his officers as a court of vice-admiralty and went to work. Under the circumstances, it was a fair enough trial. The very fact that all the prisoners were not yardarmed out of hand bore testimony to Rogers' essential and wholly practical humanity. Laxity would be fatal; so would vengeful severity. Rogers, unlike many commanders, knew this.

Witnesses gave their testimony against the accused; the accused were given full opportunity to defend themselves. Each man individually was given his hearing and passed

upon separately. The voluminous report of the trial left little uncertainty about the effort made for full justice—and that tempered by a mercy little-known in the formal courts of the day. For only nine of the sixteen pirates taken off Yumeta Island were convicted, and they were all pardoned pirates who had reverted to their former ways. The others, on one or another extenuating circumstance, were released.

Two days after sentence had been passed, the condemned nine were led out in front of the fort to the scaffold. Like all executions, it was a public affair. One hundred soldiers and trusted men guarded the prisoners; three hundred rebellious, former companions of these men milled around as spectators.

The scaffold was composed of two tall uprights, bridged across the top by a single timber from which suspended nine looped ropes. Beneath the condemned a plank scaffolding rested atop three barrels, placed end on end. As the nooses were adjusted, each man made his, what were most literally, passing comments. They were as queer and quixotic as the lives these men were about to quit.

John Augur, a middle-aged man and their titular leader, had neither washed nor changed his clothes for the occasion. He had been one of Jennings' original band, a well-known and able sailor. As a last act he called for a glass of wine and in all seriousness toasted the prosperity of the island and the health of His Excellency, the Governor.

Will Cunningham, a grizzled veteran of forty-five who had once been the pirate Blackbeard's gunner, expressed his full share of guilt and penitence for his wicked life.

Denis Macarty clambered lightly to the scaffold, gaily dressed like a prize fighter entering the ring, stripped to the waist and decked with bright ribbons.

"There was a time," said he, cheerfully, "when there were brave fellows here who would not suffer such a sight as this! I promised once I'd never die with shoes on, and damme, I won't." With that he kicked his shoes off into the crowd.

William Dowling, a sullen scowling youngster of twenty, not only expressed no penitence whatever, but volunteered the information that he had murdered his own mother, back in Ireland.

William Lewis, a prize fighter in London in his youth, showed no interest in anything except his own thirst. He had always wished to die drunk.

Tom Morris called out to the crowd, "We've a new Governor now, mates, but a harsh one. Had I known it before I'd have been a greater plague to these islands than I was!"

George Bendell said, "I have never been a pirate before. I'd have been the most villainous and profligate of them all in time." He was eighteen years old.

William Ling behaved like a true penitent. When Lewis clamored for rum, Ling told him, "Water will be more useful where we are going."

At the last possible minute the noose was slipped from the neck of George Rounsivel, and he was led off the scaffold. An instant later, the rope attached to the supporting barrels twitched them down, and the first pirates, in a once

pirate stronghold and before an audience of former pirates, were hanged.

Lacking any recognized leader, the turbulent spectators grumbled and muttered rebellion, in ineffective protest. Only one, Rob Maurice, an ex-pirate, mounting on a barrel head, openly exhorted them to violence. Rogers immediately shot him, with precision and dispatch. After this the mob sullenly withdrew and dispersed.

The last-minute reprieve of George Rounsivel showed how well Rogers knew the strength of well-directed leniency. One of the judges Rogers had appointed for this trial was Captain Burgess, an old-time and well-known pirate, but one who had shown every evidence of sincere reform. Rogers had trusted him, even to the extent that when Burgess offered his bond for the future conduct of Rounsivel, an old sailor of his, reprieve was granted.

Burgess commanded a small guard sloop under Rogers' orders and served his governor faithfully and well. After the execution, Rounsivel returned to sail again under his old captain. The bond between these two needs no further description than the scene which ended the lives of both the master and his man.

Burgess' sloop, some months afterward, was cast up on one of the treacherous Bahama reefs in the lee of heavy sea. The crew, tumbling into the sloop's boat, managed to get clear of the wreck and save themselves, but when they looked back they saw Burgess still staying with his doomed command. Rounsivel tried to persuade his mates to put back for their captain, but they refused what would have

been certain disaster. George Rounsivel then dove over-side and swam back. He and his captain were standing side by side when the wreck broke up and vanished under the sea.

The promptness and intelligence with which Woodes Rogers handled the situation not only preserved his control, but his merciful treatment of young Rounsivel strengthened his position against a repetition.



CHAPTER TEN

Ann Bonny

PIRACY had passed its peak with the prompt severity and justice meted out to John Augur and his crew, survivors of the mutiny led by Phineas Bunch. There was never another mutiny on New Providence after that episode. Just the same, from time to time, ex-pirates slipped away from the island and resumed their old calling. Among these were one crew not notable for the extent or character of their depredations, but certainly singular because of two of the personnel.

Every now and then through history there are instances of women who have successfully passed themselves off as men, and have led masculine careers under a variety of circumstances. Even today, a few women factory workers have been known to attempt the masquerade in order to win the slightly higher wage scale that is a male prerogative. But in the eighteenth century there seems to have been an unusual number who disguised themselves. Perhaps the eighteenth-century Englishwoman—for most if not all seem to be English—was at this time particularly two-fisted. Or, a contributing factor toward the success of the disguise

might have been the undoubted fact that bathing was not a custom of the time, and personal modesty in all walks of life, among all circumstances, a rigid rule. However it happened, there are authenticated instances, during the eighteenth century, of women who passed for men, who led careers not unlike those of Ann Bonny and Mary Read, and were successful.

At long last the notorious pirate John Rackam and all his crew of cutthroats had been taken prisoners, and the court of the Vice Admiral at St. Jago de la Vega, Jamaica, was making certain that their depredations would abruptly and permanently terminate. There was no mistaking the identity of the dashing "Calico Jack," so called from the striped seaman's trousers that he affected; and there was no uncertainty about his piratical career. Both were altogether too well-known throughout the West Indian Islands. But the due process of law must run its tedious course, even though perfunctory, and with but one possible terminus at the conclusion—the gallows and the gibbet.

November 28, 1720, saw all the prisoners arraigned before the bar for their sentence, a dozen of as desperate ruffians as ever were born to grace a rope's end. Lieutenant Barnet of His Majesty's sloop of war, who had surprised and taken them, had testified how he had discovered the pirate sloop at anchor off the north coast of Jamaica and how he and his men had boarded and carried her. He told, too, how Rackam and his crew had been found so much the worse for drink that there was only a slight resistance. In fact,

only two of the pirates had put up a fight, the two youths now standing before the court and more heavily manacled than the others. These two, so the Lieutenant testified, made furious resistance until overpowered by sheer weight of numbers. With pistol, cutlass, and boarding axe they had fought like wildcats, killing and wounding several of the attacking party. Cornered and surrounded, one had even discharged his last pistol among his drunken shipmates and with an oath demanded they come out and fight like men.

Some of the men captured on the pirate sloop were able to prove that they were there as prisoners, "forced men" taken from ships that the pirates had captured. These, on proof of innocence, had been released. The others stood condemned to receive their sentence, which came as a surprise to no one. All were to be hanged and the principals gibbeted as well. Then the court went through the usual form of inquiring if any had good reason why sentence should not be carried into execution. No one expected a reply when the two who had resisted capture spoke up.

"Milord, we plead our bellies." The phrase was usual for expectant mothers when sentenced to execution, for no matter how guilty the mother might be no court has power to kill an unborn child.

A roar of incredulous laughter swept prisoners and officers of justice alike, both caught up with the humor of the ribald joke. And it was well within the Newgate tradition for condemned malefactors to spend their last breath even on the edge of the scaffold in some scrap of bawdy wit. More than one had been launched into eternity under such face-

tious names as Andrew Whifflingpin or John Tugmutton.

But the two persisted in their claim until finally the court ordered its surgeon to examine them. It did not take him long. He reported they were indeed women and both several months with child. Ann Bonny, a girl still in her teens, had kept her identity a secret even from the crew she had worked and fought with. Only Rackam, her lover, and Mary Read, her companion, knew her secret. Mary Read, a woman in her middle twenties, had done similarly but steadfastly refused to name the father of her child whom she persisted in describing as her lawful husband. Both court and erstwhile comrades in arms were equally astonished at such an unprecedented situation. Pirates they certainly were and never gainsaid it, but expectant mothers they were also and as such could not be hanged.

Prompted as much by human curiosity as legal need, the full story of Ann Bonny and Mary Read was finally disclosed.

As a mystery—a story that is and probably always will be incomplete—the case of Ann Bonny might rank with such classics as *The Man in the Iron Mask* and *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*. An even more singular story in some ways, for it is in all but the essentials a fully documented account, replete with as bizarre adventures as ever befell a woman.

Ann Bonny's adventures began with her birth. More accurately, they antedated that event, for the circumstances of her existence at all were such as colored all her subsequent career. In eighteenth-century Ireland where she first saw the light of day, there was no especial stigma attached to being born on the wrong side of the blanket, as the expression

went. Illegitimacy was too usual to rouse much popular interest even in the small town of Kinsale, where her sprightly father carried on a law practice. But the ingenuity and complications of his affair with the servant girl who was her mother were such that even a Smollett or a Fielding could hardly have passed them by unnoticed. So flagrant was the scandal he finally fled the country, taking only his servant girl mistress and their baby daughter Ann with him. Behind he left a legal wife and children, a quantity of debts, and a hopelessly damaged reputation.

Charleston in the Carolina provinces of America, a lusty brawling seaport at the beginning of the eighteenth century, welcomed the fugitives—and asked no questions. Here by dint of his legal training and application, Papa rapidly improved his circumstances. In a few years he became wealthy, respected, and a plantation owner of affluence. Ann's mother died, leaving her young daughter mistress of the estate and sole heiress of a more than substantial fortune. Suitors for her hand and fortune were not slow in presenting themselves as soon as she reached marriageable age, which at that time was considered physical maturity—thirteen or fourteen. But from the beginning Ann evinced what an acquaintance described in a monument of understatement as a "fierce and resolute temper." One suitor, more ardent than the others, attempted to compromise her into marriage, which proved to be a mistake, for Ann, indignant at the outrage, thrashed the young man so soundly that he nearly died.

Then quixotically enough she either eloped with or was abducted by a good-for-nothing sailor, one James Bonny.

After they had been legally married, Bonny, whose interest was more commercial than romantic, applied for her inheritance only to find that Ann's father in a rage had disinherited her. She was as penniless as he, a possible asset in the future if her irate father repented, but for the present just excess baggage. He took his young bride to the island of New Providence in the Bahamas where they would be safer from parental vengeance and where he was already acquainted.

Naturally no questions were asked of the new couple, and there is every evidence that James Bonny was perfectly at home in this outlaw colony; in fact, had probably tried his hand at piracy himself. Such a society as this must have been rather a shock to the well-nurtured girl-bride, Ann Bonny, no matter how fierce and resolute her natural disposition. But it was not destined to last for long; the pirate commonwealth had at long last attracted too much attention.

James Bonny was one of those who remained on New Providence after Captain Woodes Rogers imposed the authority of the Crown. Bonny not only took the pardon and amnesty for whatever his past misdeeds may have been, but ingratiated himself with the new governor by turning spy and informer on his former shipmates. In this way he earned the cordial dislike of members of the old regime and the very limited confidence of the new.

About this time a dashing ex-pirate, John Rackam, put in an appearance on the island and before long attracted the attention of Ann Bonny, who by this time hated and de-

spised her husband. She and Rackam, acting apparently in good faith, tried to get her a divorce by sale from Bonny, but only succeeded in getting into serious trouble.

Divorce by sale was an ancient English practice, well-sanctioned by use, but never legally recognized. Based on the mutual consent of all parties, a wife could be transferred by bill of sale from one man to another. It was a process complementary to marriage by common law and quite as familiar to the English lower class. Bonny immediately informed the new governor. Rackam and Ann were arrested, and Ann was promised that she should be stripped and publicly flogged at the repetition of any such "lewdness" in the future. But she was not one to submit tamely.

One stormy night, dressed in seaman's clothes, she made rendezvous with Rackam and a few of his old shipmates who had come to the island. Together they overpowered the anchor watch of John Haman's sloop which lay in the harbor, cut the cables, and drove down the bay, past the guard ship and the forts, and out into open ocean and a career of piracy. Haman's sloop, reputed the fastest in the islands, was perfect for their purpose. They harried the coasts and plundered the shipping from Cuba to Jamaica and such was the speed of their ship that they made a profitable livelihood.

Only Rackam knew Ann's sex; to all the others she was just another shipmate and ordinary sailor, handling the ship or fisting cutlass like any man. But there was nothing platonic in her relationship with her captain, for in less than a year she had to be set ashore in Cuba and go into seclusion while their first baby was born. There is no record of what

happened to the child, but not long after its birth Ann was back at sea again in her dual role of pirate and pirate's mistress.

Then something happened that disturbed the tranquillity of this singular extramarital establishment. No one knows exactly what, but the upshot was that Ann's eyes began to rove in the direction of a personable young sailor lately recruited from a captured Dutch vessel. Finding opportunity she took the young man aside and revealed to him the secret of her sex. What was her embarrassment when she discovered that this young Dutchman was a woman, too, as effectively disguised as Ann herself! Rackam surprised them together and in a jealous rage would have killed them both if they had not revealed the whole story.

Mary Read, who had passed as a Dutch mariner, was a few years older than Ann and had spent most of her life disguised as a man. Born in London, out of wedlock, she had been raised as a boy in the stead of an older legitimate brother who had died, for there was a substantial inheritance at stake. Then she had been a page to a Frenchwoman of fashion, a cabin boy on a British man-o'-war and finally, at maturity, had taken the king's shilling and fought in the wars in the Low Countries, where she had made an excellent record first as a foot soldier and then in a squadron of dragoons. Eventually she married one of her fellow troopers, a situation which attracted no small amount of comment in the army. The officers and troopers passed the hat around for the newlyweds to such effect that they resigned from the service and set themselves up as proprietors of The

Three Horseshoes, a tavern in Breda, where they had the pick of the military trade, especially during winter cessation of hostilities. The Peace of Utrecht destroyed their little business. Then her husband died suddenly of a fever. Mary Read, ex-publican and ex-dragoon, had no alternative but to try her fortunes as a man again. She had shipped on a Dutch vessel for the West Indies, which was intercepted, and she was taken by Rackam and his pirates. Since pirates habitually stripped all prisoners who refused to join with them, Mary Read found she had no alternative but to become a pirate herself. And this she had done.

But pirate though she was, Mary Read was still a woman, and not long afterward fell in love with a young man who was one of their prisoners, or "forced men." She claimed that they were married in "the eyes of God," and indeed there were no other eyes under their circumstances to bear testimony. But it is clear that she was sincerely in love with him for it prompted her to an act of devotion unique in the history of human affection. Her "husband" quarreled with one of the pirates and in consequence was challenged to a duel. Mary Read, more confident of her own ability in such matters than her "husband's," picked a fight with the challenger and called him out for a duel at an earlier hour. Dueling was the conventional manner of settling disputes among pirates and conformed to a distinctive code. The principals were set ashore on a sandspit and, in the presence of their shipmates, had it out with cutlass and pistol. There was never more than one survivor.

Both missed on the exchange of pistol shots and closed

with cutlasses. A long and bloody contest ensued, until finally Mary's better swordsmanship prevailed and she ran her opponent through the body and dropped him dead at her feet. At the risk of her own life she had saved her "husband" from danger.

This incident came out at her trial and greatly influenced the court in her favor, but she refused to disclose her "husband's" name, and he, released because he was a "forced man," never came forward to claim her or his child that she was carrying.

Both Ann Bonny and Mary Read were reprieved on account of their condition; their shipmates, lacking a like excuse, were promptly hanged. Rackam, on the way to the gallows, was taken to see his erstwhile mistress and comrade in arms, but she had little comfort to offer. "Had you fought like a man," said she, "you would not hang like a dog."

Mary Read, abandoned by her consort, died in childbirth in prison. She lived most of her life as a man and died like a woman. Ann Bonny survived the delivery of her child, and afterward several of her father's influential friends, resident in Jamaica, came forward to obtain her parole and eventual release. It seems reasonable to suppose that perhaps her wealthy father came to the aid of his errant daughter, but no one knows. All that is known is that she was neither executed nor died before her time. After such a turbulent youth she quietly vanished into an oblivion that has never been penetrated.

But the real mystery is that never once in all the record

of Ann Bonny's career does her father's name appear. Daughter of a wealthy and influential planter of early Charleston, she must have been well known, and yet to this day no one knows who Ann Bonny really was or what her life afterward became.

One of the eyewitnesses to their trial had sufficient foresight to record a story which, under any other circumstances, would never have passed belief even in the liveliest fiction.

Captain Charles Johnson published his *General History of the Pyrates* in London in 1724, four years after the trial of Ann Bonny and Mary Read. It was a popular book and immediately went through several revised editions. The fourth edition, 1726, is prefaced:

"As to the Lives of our two female Pyrates, we must confess they appear a little extravagant, yet they are never the less true for seeming so, but as they were publickly try'd for their Pyracies, there are living Witnesses enough to justify what we have laid down concerning them; it is certain we have produced some Particulars which were not so publickly known, the Reason is, we were more inquisitive into the Circumstances of their past Lives, than other People who had no other Design than that of gratifying their own private Curiosity: If there are some Incidents and Turns in their Stories which may give them a little the Air of a NOVEL, they are not invented or contrived for that Purpose, it is a Kind of Reading this Author is but little acquainted

with, but as he himself was exceedingly diverted with them when they were related to him, he thought they might have the same Effect upon the Reader."

This fourth edition of Johnson's *History* is described by Sabin: "This rare work embodies many items relating to the Colonial History of British America nowhere else extant." But rarity is not its only feature. The author's presentation of his material can be described as delirium tremens in printer's ink. The *History* is in the form of short biographical sketches of prominent pirates of the day. This would have been all right had he only stuck by his character until he was through with him and then moved on to the next, but he didn't. The rascalities of one pirate would bring him to another and then another, then to something heard the other day about sailing conditions off the Brazils, and so to a whole-hearted damnation of the Jesuits and a conclusion about native customs in Madagascar. Sometimes he returned to the subject; just as often it was never heard of again. Sometimes the subject would reappear under another heading, as a digression, a hundred pages later. One never knew.

In fact, trailing individuals and situations requires wandering after clues and bits and traces through two plump volumes of inebriated eighteenth-century type and penetrating a jungle of digressions. Johnson's *History* is one of the hardest books to read in the English language.

What of the veracity of this Captain Charles Johnson? Who was he?

Philip Gosse, authority for pirates in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, reports:

"It used to be said that Charles Johnson was inaccurate and unreliable, but recent research has proved again and again that whoever he was he had first-hand knowledge of his subject and is to be relied upon in almost every detail."

The "whoever he was" is intriguing. "Captain Charles Johnson" is obviously a pseudonym. Considering the minute details found here and there through his *History*, one cannot help suspecting that he may have been a pirate himself. If such were the case, a nom de plume would be essential.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

The End of an Epoch

WOODES ROGERS' administrative troubles did not end with the suppression of the New Providence pirates. Neither did that one act end the epoch of West Indian piracy. Rogers still continued in his position of authority—and troubles: piracy, denied the advantages of its former land base, persisted elsewhere.

Threats from Spanish warships, danger of piratical incursion from the sea, and the ever-present possibility of revolt among the islanders kept up just the same. A crisis had been safely passed but might at any time reappear in any one or combination of the three forms.

Again and again Rogers wrote, begging the Crown for more soldiers from England, honest colonists to leaven his quasi-reformed pirate population, money to carry on his administration, warships to help protect the islands, but the Crown was too busy elsewhere, or indifferent to his fate. Frequently his letters to London were captured en route by pirates still at large. From time to time discontented islanders slipped off to sea again and resumed their piratical

ways. The islands were not and probably could not be self-supporting. Rogers spent all his own fortune in the struggle to keep this colony for the Crown. All he had won from his brilliant voyage around the world vanished into the sands of New Providence, until he himself had nothing but his pension as a captain on half-pay. Still nothing in the form of concrete support came out of England.

Rogers was more in the position of a stranded sailor among potentially savage natives than that of the official representative of the King of England at an outpost of the Empire.

Finally he gave up his position and returned to England, leaving the fate of the colony in the hands of a subordinate. The conditions Rogers met in London were as difficult as those he had left behind him at New Providence. Perhaps he expressed himself in too forthright, and too nautical, language to those in authority and in high places. Anyway, the net result was that Rogers was relieved of his post as governor and a Mr. Phenney appointed to take his place.

George Phenney and his wife, who accompanied him to New Providence, were not long in rousing a howl of protest even from that motley and hard-bitten population. Both husband and wife, taking on a little of the piratical atmosphere of the place, plundered the island methodically, systematically and with all possible haste. They even dismantled the fort that Rogers had so painfully erected and equipped, and sold the salvage to fill their own pockets.

Why marauding Spaniards or pirates still at large did not profit by this interlude to take over the islands will always

remain a mystery. Probably they were not acquainted with such changed conditions in time to take the golden opportunity.

Phenney was recalled and Rogers, again reinstated, sailed once more for New Providence. This time, after he had picked up after Phenney's depredations, he had better support from England. High places had tardily recognized and began to appreciate the unremitting and devoted efforts of this conscientious and honest empire builder.

Fourteen years after his first landing on the shore of the former pirate republic, Woodes Rogers died and was buried on New Providence. Neither he nor anyone after him has ever brought independent prosperity to the islands, but Rogers held them for his King and in so doing did more to suppress piracy in the West Indies than any other single man.

Piracy continued all along but never flourished as formerly without its all-important land base. Pirates never found another to take the place of New Providence. They never had another well-established clearinghouse for the sale of their plunder, and without this piracy became reduced to a subsistence livelihood, just enough to hold damaged soul and outlawed body together for a season only. This dogged retention of the Bahamas under royal authority, which was Woodes Rogers' great contribution, slowly but surely strangled piracy and finally closed the epoch.

But there were other factors present which were all tending in the same direction. In the very nature of events, piracy in the West Indies was doomed. The conditions

which resulted in piracy in the first place changed, with the result that piracy could no longer exist.

The great epoch of piracy was as much a victim of the war that followed the Peace of Utrecht as it was a product of that brief armistice. For war had broken out again shortly after Woodes Rogers had reformed the pirate republic and stronghold of New Providence. This same war, under various names and with occasional intermissions, was to continue for the ensuing century. It was in large measure a naval war between England on the one hand, and France and Spain, on the other. The prize was the supremacy of the seas, which brought with it the treasure of the Western Hemisphere, and the theater of operations was the West Indies. Spain had the better title to the American colonies, if legal title counts for anything in matters of high politics. But Spain had shot its bolt with the short brilliant epoch of its Conquistadores; colonial administration became worse and worse under a clumsy and corrupt bureaucracy at home. Little by little, after each defeat, Spaniards became less able to defend the continents they claimed as theirs. French Bourbons sat upon the Spanish throne, whose only strength lay in their relationship with the royal house of France. France, weakened by continual wars abroad and mismanagement and extravagance at home, was still strong with an unbelievable national vitality that should have succumbed to revolution a century before it actually did. Yet the monarchy of France possessed an inherent, cancerous weakness that was destined to make for greater and yet

greater weakness as time went on, a growing debility, gradually but surely sapping its national strength.

England, on the other hand, was just as surely gaining in strength. After the seventeenth century with internal dissension and fierce civil strife, religious disharmony and social collisions, England under the steady methodical and wholly uninspired rule of the four Georges moved from strength to greater strength. The merchants of middle-class England were the driving force of the developing empire. Businessmen have vital need of free and easy transportation and, if these businessmen are on an island, they must perforce turn all their attention and resources toward ships and shipping. Sugar and its valuable by-products were in the West Indies; so were the dyes essential in the British woolen trade. The gold that lay there was legal tender and attractive under any circumstances. England had ample incentive to press her expansion into the West Indies and power, which increased with every victory, to do so.

Heretofore, individual ships fought at sea; now whole fleets under admirals and with subjoined amphibious operations battled for supremacy. Admiral Vernon, though he failed to take Cartagena, the greatest Spanish fortress on the mainland, showed to all the world that the strength of Spain was crumbling. After him came Rodney, the greatest sailor of them all, and who perhaps more than any single man led England to the freedom of the seas—for England. Rodney served his country during fifty years of active maritime service, and mostly in the West Indies. He was a man

who providentially combined genius as a fighting sailor with great administrative talent, political dexterity with the Admiralty at home, and, at the same time, had the proper birth and breeding so essential for that period. It was Rodney in the West Indies, after a lifetime spent in the struggle, who finally destroyed the effective sea power of both France and Spain.

During this century of naval warfare, there was no such thing possible in the West Indies as an unemployed sailor. The Royal Navy and fleets of privateers had an insatiable need of man power. The inducements were greater than they had ever been before. More humane treatment was accorded common sailors than formerly. Grog, invented by and named for Admiral Vernon, had worked a wonderful attraction on nautical thinking. Also press gangs were so active no longshore loafer, no matter how seedy or down at the heel, remained long at liberty ashore. There were now few single ships of any kind at sea; instead there were convoys closely guarded by fleets of first-rate men-o'-war. Piracy had little chance to develop and less to grow.

Another factor in the decline of piracy was the diminution of the indenture system. No soul's awakening had occurred regarding the abuses of this scheme of colonial migration; slavery of the African blacks had simply replaced the white bondsmen on the West Indian plantations. Ever since the first temporary permit to indulge in the slave trade, the *Assiento*, granting the English the right to sell slaves in Spanish colonies for a limited period, English slavers, under the title of the African Company, had driven a thriving

business. The Assiento once granted was never permitted to wholly lapse again. Jamaica became the greatest slave market in the world. The Jamaican planters soon found that Africans worked better, lived longer on worse food, and were in the long run cheaper and more tractable laborers than Europeans. Under these black hands the sugar plantations prospered as they never had before, or would again after slavery had been abolished. The malcontent indentured servant, escaped, outlawed, and ready for piracy, became a thing of the past. Similarly too, now that Great Britain herself, after the Jacobite, Irish, and religious troubles were moderately settled, no longer shipped so many felons overseas. There were still convicts transported to the colonies in penal servitude, but fewer of them. No one in the West Indies wanted or needed them any more for labor.

Together with the first decline in piracy, English laws and statutes were introduced into the West Indian colonies and made applicable to all the colonists. There was less violence now than formerly when justice could be obtained only by social status and wealth. With the decline of corruption thus brought about, violence declined as well. The West Indies were rapidly growing up and out of their brawling, murderous, and drunken youth. Public opinion, which controls all such things, was turning away from the wild, disorderly manners and customs of the first generation of immigrants. Piracy was essentially a frontier condition, and frontiers grow up and become respectable after a while.

The West Indies, which at one time bred pirates by the score who vexed shipping in the Caribbean to a remarkable

extent and spread from thence to more and greater plunders across the seas to Africa, India and the East, had been the fountainhead of this short epidemic of nautical outlawry. When this source was stopped up, the piracies of the other parts of the world ceased too. Madagascar, athwart the ship lanes to India, was for long a favorite haunt of pirates, graduated from the West Indian training school. But in time these died off by natural or unnatural causes, and there were no replacements to recruit their numbers.

Pirates have been among the first results of a civilization expanding until the land could no longer contain it. They have been the "bad men" of a kind of maritime frontier wherever such a condition came into being, in part the results of historical processes, in part producers of the next more cultivated phase. They were the misfits, the rejected of the civilization for which they were at the same time the vanguard.

Expanding Islam impinging on the Mediterranean so filled that sea with pirate corsairs, that Europe had to search elsewhere for expansion. Columbus showed the westward way and was immediately followed by a succession of roving, seafaring men. Soldier and sailor adventurers of Spain, discontented Calvinist sailors of France, Elizabethan gentlemen adventurers were among the first to sail the waters of the New World. The first Europeans rooted on these alien islands were buccaneers, filibusters, freebooters, the "Brethren of the Coast" and their Spanish colonial counterparts. More formal warfare transmuted these into the privateersmen who were amenable to laws and orders from their respec-

tive kings as long as the war lasted. A brief period of uneasy peace produced outright piracy which, focused in New Providence, harried the Caribbean and spread far over all the oceans of the world. Warfare, which had thrown them out of employment in the first place, was resumed and re-absorbed them once more. When the fighting stopped a century later the West Indies had grown up—were no longer a frontier and no longer required or could harbor such wild and desperate characters.

But the West Indies had grown up in a peculiar way, unlike any other of the English settlements in the Western Hemisphere. The Indian had been replaced by Spaniard, the Spaniard by English, and then by their own action the English replaced themselves by their importation of hundreds of thousands of Negro slaves from Africa. These last and wholly involuntary immigrants adapted themselves to their new surroundings better than any and automatically excluded by their very numbers and rate of increase any threat of further European replacement. By the time of the abolition of West Indian slavery there were so very many more black inhabitants than white that the West Indies became and have remained in actuality a black man's land ever since.

White men, former pirates or descendants of pirates, turned north toward the North American mainland for their further spread and development, forsaking the Caribbean and its islands. The breed which had pioneered the New World in the West Indies turned to join forces with its compatriots on the Atlantic Coast and became woven

into that tangled hereditary snarl that eventually became the United States.

The frontier had moved ashore and with it went what in former days would have been the raw material of piracy. The misfit and rejected of society plunged into the mountains and forests of the North American mainland, where generation after generation of gun-toting bushwhackers spread further and further west until they reached the Pacific Ocean. Now there is no longer any frontier.



APPENDIX A

Women Who Passed as Men

BECAUSE the eighteenth-century English law held that a married woman was her husband's chattel, we have been accustomed to think of the role of women of this time as menial and subservient. Married women usually had children and being thus encumbered had need for masculine protection, which was the legal corollary. If life as it was lived in the eighteenth-century England required a wife to surrender much of her rights as an individual, it also required the husband to assume the greater responsibility in her protection. It by no means followed that women as such were the pitifully weak, timorous, and clinging lovelies of the sentimental Victorian novel. The idea of the weaker sex is one which has little counterpart in the reality of any period—and certainly did not pertain to the eighteenth-century Englishwoman.

Unmarried women, widows, and spinsters were just as much people within the physical limitations of their gender as any man jack in the kingdom. They customarily held important administrative positions in business and estate management on equal terms with men. Only the offices of

government administration, the professions, and the church were closed to them. Many a well-born widow took over her husband's business or estate and handled it well, and the matter was not thought at all unwomanly or odd. Women of the middle class engaged in all kinds of trades and businesses. There were tavernkeepers, ship chandlers, ironmongers, bakers and brewers and candlemakers, as well as dressmakers and tailors. In fact, the name "Brewster" is the feminine of "Brewer" and stems from the fact that brewing was for a long time considered a female occupation. Similarly, "Webster" is the feminine of "Weber," another occupational name. In agricultural life women worked along with men in the labors of the field and harvest; they were expected to, if that was their station in life. No one considered such work unfeminine or in any way unusual, if the women had no children or household to attend to. Except in the narrowed eyes of the law, women enjoyed perfect equality with men.

In fact, the outstanding success of English colonization is very largely traceable to this equality—or equivalence of opportunity—between the sexes. The qualities of the pioneer woman have been well recognized as a definite factor in the development of the American West; their great-grandmothers brought those same qualities and capacity for hard work from the Old World to the New. As one historian has so aptly expressed it, the Pilgrim Mothers not only had to share the hardships of the American wilderness on equal terms with their menfolk, they had to put up with the Pilgrim Fathers as well!

Between French, Spanish, and English colonists there was a marked difference, which altered the whole character of the resultant colonies. French and Spanish colonists were inclined to take to wife womenfolk from among the natives and, in so doing, transmitted only a fraction of their European culture to their posterity. Mexican cooking, for example, is not so much Spanish as Aztec Indian. The native wives of the first Spanish settlers cooked in the only way they knew. Spanish womenfolk did not appear in the New World until after the colonies were well established. The same, in large measure, held for the French. Neither, for this reason, really attached themselves by firm family bonds to the land they had newly acquired. Their attitude toward their new home was that of conquered province, where one went to get all that was possible as soon as possible and then return to Europe and spend it.

English settlers almost from the very first brought their sturdy womenfolk with them, married, really settled down, and reconstructed in the New World as good a facsimile of what they had left behind as they could. Natives were not incorporated, but pushed bodily aside and with relatively little admixture of blood. Used to hard work and an equal or more than equal opportunity with their men, Englishwomen accepted and overcame the grueling hardships of pioneering and transferred the English family life, manners, and customs almost intact across the seas.

Under such conditions as this, it is easy to see that many women carried the equality a step farther and assumed (for various reasons) the appearance of men, did the work

of men, and passed for men, working in masculine company. There are instances even today of such a happening. I once talked for half an hour with a Colorado rancher, as typical a cowpuncher, as lean and weather-beaten as the best, before I discovered she was a woman. The only way I knew was when we exchanged names; she gave hers as Edna Welch!

Defoe, who had almost a vested literary interest in adventure, wrote the biography of Mrs. Christian Davies, otherwise known as "Mother Ross," the year after her death in Chelsea Military Hospital, 1739. This veteran woman soldier was treated with full military honors, and she deserved them as much as any redcoat that ever took the king's shilling. After all there was no doubt expressed or implied that she had served long and well under the great Duke of Marlborough as a foot soldier and later as a dragoon in the long wars of the Spanish Succession. She was a woman, wife, mother, and at the same time an active, courageous and redoubtable soldier in the field.

Mrs. Davies became a soldier when she was a young matron, proprietress of a Dublin public house and the mother of three infant children. It all came about in a curious but understandable fashion. She and her husband were well set up in a prosperous business and well along in the establishment of their family. Life was unrolling for them all in a happy and conventional fashion when an unforeseen and unforeseeable circumstance deflected instantly and permanently the whole even tenor of their ways. Mr. Davies was, as so often happens with professional publicans, a man of

sober habits. It was an age when men ordinarily drank to excess. He who dispensed the refreshment habitually drank very little.

But one day he met a friend and with him transacted a successful bit of business. It was no great fiscal event but enough to call for a drink or two before going home. Neither had the wish or object of intoxication, but the spirits overtook them. They became merry and befuddled as they moved erratically from pub to pub and finally went out to a troop ship in the harbor for a bowl of added punch with some of the embarked soldiers who were friends of theirs. The next thing they knew they were far out at sea, en route to the Low Countries, and soldiers themselves.

For a full year Mrs. Davies, back in Dublin, had no idea what had befallen her husband. In fact, she had given him up for dead, when a letter finally reached her from Flanders where her husband was soldiering. He had written a dozen previous letters, none of which had ever reached her. He was in the army, much against his will, but it was easier to get in than get out. He could not get away from the army now that the war was in full campaign. They were and always had been devoted to one another—fully mutual and ardent. If he could find no way of reunion, she was determined that she would. Being a resolute woman, she promptly sold her business, farmed out her three small children with relatives, and enlisted in the army too. She was a strong woman who from her youth had been a good deal of a tomboy; it was no especial hardship to assume men's dress and act the part that went with it.

Once in the Low Countries she would at least be in the same terrain as her husband. Eventually she would find him somewhere in the army. There was no better means of communication available at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

But it took her several years and a half-dozen bloody campaigns of active service as a foot soldier before she happened to find her man. All this time she played her masculine part without detection. She even went so far as to have an affair with a Dutch girl, as all soldiers did, but necessity made it more platonic than the adventures of most of her comrades. She even went the length of acknowledging the unwanted offspring of the unfortunate young woman who was somewhat confused about her child's paternity anyway. Mrs. Davies fought well and endured with fortitude all the hardships of the soldier's life. She was wounded, fought duels, pillaged, drank and frolicked with her comrades in arms just like any he in the lot.

She never disclosed her sex until she eventually found her husband again. There was a touching reunion, but by that time she had become so accustomed to the military life she was loath to return to womanhood again. Together, man and wife, they agreed that they would become comrades and pass as brothers. This they did for a long time, until she happened to be seriously wounded in action, her skull fractured by a shell fragment; then the attending surgeon discovered who she was. The discovery made quite a stir in the army—and ended her military career, at least as a soldier. In those days, soldiers took their wives with

them on campaign. Mrs. Davies now went as Mrs. Davies and with her husband. She became a camp follower and sutler to the army.

Wars lasted so long at this time they were a permanent occupation to those practiced in the art. Mr. and Mrs. Davies had become professional soldiers, just as formerly they had been in the public-house business. When Mr. Davies was killed in action his widow kept right on in the army, but went back to more active service, again disguised as a dragoon. She eventually married a fellow soldier, turned camp follower again, was widowed, and again returned to the ranks.

As long as the war lasted, which was thirteen years, Mrs. Davies served in alternate capacity of soldier or camp follower. With the peace she retired to private life.

She had become a famous character with the armed forces and, as "Mother Ross," a name derived from one of her several successive husbands, she was a sort of military legend. In her old age, her services were officially recognized and she was allowed residence at Chelsea Military Hospital, among other old soldiers broken by the wars. There she lived and there she died, a grizzled, scarred old woman who limped, from a French musket ball imbedded in her thigh. It was there that Defoe found her and from her own lips took down her curious story.

Hannah Snell, who flourished during the middle of the same century, had the added distinction of being by turns a soldier, marine, and a sailor, in the course of her eventful

life. Like Mrs. Davies, Hannah Snell began her adventures in the attempt to find her missing husband. She was a young married woman of London, whose matrimonial choice had not turned out too well. In fact her husband of less than a year had simply walked out and left her. She, being a determined character, set off after him. She had no means to do otherwise than search England on foot. It was awkward to wander the countryside as a woman, so she borrowed a suit of clothes from her brother-in-law and walked the highways and byways as a man. This proved such hard work that she finally enlisted in the army, in a regiment being formed against the disturbances in Scotland where the "Forty-five" rebellion was in progress. But a brief taste of army life was enough for Hannah. She deserted almost at once and, shortly afterward, tried her fortune with the Marine Corps. The Marines had been ordered to foreign service and before she was well aware of what was going on, she was en route to the East Indies. The voyage out experienced near shipwreck several times, but eventually she and her contingent arrived in India in time for the siege of Pondichery. Hannah Snell distinguished herself in this stubborn and bloody battle against the French in India and was wounded a dozen times in the assault upon the fort. One wound was of such nature that surgical aid was necessary—and was also of such nature that she would be unable to preserve the secret of her true gender. She operated on herself by herself and effected a complete cure.

But the resultant illness kept her in India long after her corps of Marines had returned to England. She thereupon

joined a man-o'-war as a common sailor and sailed back to England. It was harder to keep her sex a secret on board ship, but she managed to play the part so well that she earned from her messmates the nickname of "Hearty Jemmy." The name she used when in disguise was James Grey.

It was on this return from the East that she happened upon the fate of her errant husband. One of the sailors on board had recently been in Genoa and heard about it. Her husband, it seemed, had also taken to the sea but with less success. He had gone ashore in Genoa and incontinently murdered an Italian gentleman. The authorities had caught him and, as their custom in such cases was, had sewn him in a sack and dropped him in the harbor. Hannah Snell was a widow—and just as glad of it by this time.

Discharged from the sea and ashore again in London, Hannah Snell did what many who achieve notoriety have done before and since her time. She revealed her whole story and went on the vaudeville stage. This was a good act and well patronized until the novelty wore thin. She made a bit of money this way and invested it in the next of the usual sequelae of notoriety. She bought a public house called "The Widow in Masquerade—The Female Warrior," where she presided behind the bar for many years. In her later life she had the misfortune to lose her mind. She died in Bethlehem Hospital at the age of sixty-nine.

The British Army was not the only one to be distinguished by a woman in the ranks disguised as a man. The Army

of the United States had hardly come into existence before it numbered one young woman on its muster roll. She was Deborah Sampson, who enlisted in the Fourth Massachusetts Regiment on her eighteenth birthday. There was a different kind of marital trouble behind her action than the previous instances of her English sisters-in-arms. Also the war of American Independence exerted a distinct attraction on the young woman. Miss Sampson was an enthusiastic patriot with all the Massachusetts zeal for the revolutionary cause, and coupled with this fervor was the fact that she was being courted by a wealthy suitor, whom she disliked but who was being urged on by her parents. Deborah claimed that she heard "voices," somewhat like Joan of Arc, requesting her presence at the front. Anyway she abruptly quitted farm life and a career as a schoolteacher to join the forces, under the name of Robert Shurtleff. Shurtleff saw considerable active duty as an infantryman in the bushwhacking kind of fighting that characterized the greater part of the war. On one occasion she rescued an English girl about to be burned at the stake by the Oneida Indians who acted as allies against the British. If there had been appropriate disparity in gender this might have been a most romantic rescue. But as it was nothing of the kind came of it. At another time she led a raiding party and captured a squad of fifteen British officers and men without firing a shot. Once single-handed she captured an Indian who looked to her a little on the bogus side. She peeled his shirt off and discovered that he was a British secret agent painted to resemble an Indian.

The principal formal battle of her military career was Yorktown, 1781, and it was here she had the surprise of overhearing her own proper name, Deborah Sampson, mentioned in a knot of yarning soldiers. Her astonishment was heightened by recognizing the speakers as her formerly rejected suitor and her own younger brother. They in turn recognized her—and that was the end of the military career of Sergeant Robert Shurtleff.

Perhaps because there was no vaudeville stage in the United States of that day, or perhaps because she was a product of Massachusetts and a schoolteacher, Deborah Sampson took a more literate way of perpetuating her memory and deeds. She wrote her autobiography under the title of *The Female Review*, published in 1797, in which she recounted her adventures and experiences as the only woman in General George Washington's Army.

Apparently, once one has savored playing such a role as she had done, there follows a desire to continue the disguise. Back home in Massachusetts and the war over, Deborah disliked the return to feminine life. She left home and got a job as a farm hand on a distant farm. She held down the job and all went well until unaccountably she fell in love with her boss, a personable young bachelor. Here the masquerade really ended, and permanently. They were married, settled down on the farm, and raised a large number of children. Deborah, after a career as chore girl, schoolteacher, soldier, farm hand, became a farm housewife and in this capacity ended her days in Sharon, Massachusetts, at the age of sixty-eight. She never received a pension for her mil-

itary service, since the republic of those days was dilatory about such matters. However her services were recognized by the State of Massachusetts in the form of a liberal bounty. After her death, her children received a grant from Congress for their mother's role as the first woman to bear arms in the United States Army.

It is not at all clear just how these enterprising females managed to conceal their sex in the exclusive and close company of men. Intimate details of conduct and behavior are never fully explained, nor is it within the scope of the present writing to try and explain all the *modus operandi* of such disguise. However, the fact remains that women were able to manage somehow and that is all that is of immediate concern. It is an incontrovertible fact that women—perfectly normal women by all usual standards—have passed as men and have led masculine careers for long periods of time, under a great variety of circumstances, and have escaped detection.



APPENDIX B

Divorce by Sale

NO ONE knows when or how the singular idea of “divorce by sale” originated in England. There is good evidence that the custom was in a flourishing condition long before the Danish invasions, which would place the date at some time prior to the eighth century A.D., and that is far enough back to insure respectable antiquity for the custom—the only thing about it that is respectable.

Marriage by common law is quite as old an idea, perhaps older. It is conceivable that divorce by sale might well be the corollary. When a man and woman have lived together for a certain length of time and their relationship is a matter of common knowledge, they are considered married by common law, and forever after legally bound to each other. Public opinion still grudgingly consents to this arrangement. Divorce by sale is little more than releasing such bonds by the simple expedient of selling the wife at public auction to the highest bidder, both parties being perfectly agreeable to the idea. For a great many centuries in England this was generally held to be an appropriate procedure; for the last

two centuries the idea had been frowned upon with increasing severity, until now it is happily, perhaps, extinct.

Among the English peasantry the "Horn Market" was well established and frequently resorted too, but this seldom happened outside the lowest class of rural society. The procedure was for husband to lead his wife to market, on full market day, with a halter around her neck. She was then tied to a cattle ring in the market square while he lifted up his voice, offering her for sale. The other man—there always was another in the matter—would be standing by and offer a nominal bid. Five shillings and a pot of beer was considered usual. The two men would haggle a bit just for form's sake, then a bill of sale would be made out and the exchange made. The other man would unhitch his bride and, after towing her around the marketplace, would lead her home. Such transactions were used as an excuse for a good deal of ribald comment, generalized vulgarity, and frequent rioting. Law officers and magistrates frowned on the custom and tried to stop it, but seldom succeeded. Like the shivaree (*charivari*, before it suffered anglicization) on wedding nights, or the skimmington ride in public burlesque of a henpecked husband, it was an Old English custom. Nothing to be very proud of ancestrally, but custom established by centuries of usage just the same, and as such having great authority over the Anglo-Saxon mind.

There is an eyewitness account of a divorce by sale in Ashburn, Derbyshire, which the magistrates attempted to stop but were prevented by the mob. This was in 1818. The French gentleman, visitor to the British Isles, who witnessed

this transaction was horrified but at the same time fascinated by the novelty. He asked the local magistrate in Ashburn about the legality of such a sale and received this for answer.

“Although the real object of my sending the constables was to prevent the scandalous sale, the apparent motive was that of keeping the peace, which people coming to the market in a sort of tumult, would have a tendency to disturb. As to the act of selling itself, I do not think I have a right to prevent it, or even oppose any obstacle to it, because it rests upon a custom preserved by the people of which perhaps it would be dangerous to deprive them by any law for that purpose.”

Major-General Pillet, Knight of St. Louis and member of the Legion of Honor, took a dim view of the manners and customs of perfidious Albion, generally. This particular subject of the Horn Market bothered him so much he hunted up further references in the public press. What shocked him especially was the light tone assumed by the *Statesman* of February 26, 1814, in speaking about so lewd a matter:

“SALE OF WIVES

“A gallant son of Mars, of Nottingham, by the name of Linker, already on the wrong side of fifty, still retains the power of getting into the good graces of the belles, although they may not be exactly what are called prudes. The wife of a militia-man named Toone is reckoned in the number of his conquests. Toone being in Nottingham on a furlough,

and thinking he had reason to complain of the fidelity of his other half, resolved to get rid of her by auction, trying nevertheless to make as much as possible of his merchandise. The wife who was only a burden to him was exposed for sale in the Swine Market on Saturday evening and set up at auction for three-pence, when no other amateur presenting but the noble son of Mars, who was very willing to raise the bid to six-pence, she was delivered to him at that price with an halter around her neck. The numerous spectators admired, without envy, at seeing the amiable spoil delivered into the hands of her amorous purchaser."

Horn Market, like the custom of the shivaree, was carried to the New World by immigrating English peasantry. As early as 1645, "The P'ticular Court" of Hartford, Connecticut records, "Baggett Egleston, for bequething his wyfe to a young man is fyned 20 shillings." Nearly one hundred years later, *The Boston Evening Post*, March 15, 1736, published this curious item:

"BOSTON: The beginning of last Week a pretty odd and uncommon Adventure happened in this Town, between 2 mer and a certain woman, each one claiming her as his Wife, but so it was that one of them had actually disposed of his Right in her to the other for Fifteen Shillings, this Currency, who had paid only ten of it in part, and refus'd to pay the other Five, inclining rather to quit the Woman and lose his Earnest; but two Gentlemen happening to be present who were Friends to Peace, charitably gave him half a

Crown apiece, to enable him to fulfil his Agreement, which the Creditor readily took and gave the Woman a modest Salute wishing her well, and his Brother Sterling much Joy of his Bargain."

The last notice to appear in public print outside of fiction, such as the famous scene in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, seems to be when Abraham Boothroyd sold his wife Clara for five shillings. This took place in Sheffield, England, July 13, 1887.



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